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THE WORKS

OF THE

LEARNED AND REVEREND

JOHN SCOTT, D. D.

SOMETIME RECTOR OF ST. GILES'S IN THE FIELDS.

A NEW EDITION, IN SIX VOLUMES.

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TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

AND

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

HENRY,

LORD BISHOP OF LONDON,

AND ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S MOST HONOURABLE PRIVY-COUNCIL, &c.

My Lord,

THAT I presume to lay these papers at your Lordship's feet, is not because I imagine they deserve, but because I am conscious they need so great a patronage. Not but that, were the discourses they contain as great and meritorious as their argument, they might safely shelter themselves under their own deserts, and challenge homage, instead of begging protection: but, though I have done my best endeavour to treat this great theme suitably to its own native majesty, yet I am very sensible it hath not escaped the too common fate of all such sublime and excellent subjects, which is, to be fouled and sullied by coarse handling. But my lot falling in this unhappy age, wherein the best church and re-

ligion in the world are in such apparent danger of being crucified, like their blessed Author, between those two thieves, (and both, alas! impenitent ones,) superstition and enthusiasm, I thought myself obliged not to sit still, as an unconcerned spectator of the tragedy, but in my little sphere, and according to my poor ability, to endeavour its prevention: and considering that the most effectual means the Romanists have used to subvert this church, which they so much envy, and all the reformations do so much admire and depend on, hath been to divide her own children from her, and arm them against her, by starting new opinions among them, and engaging their zeal (which was wont to be employed to better purposes) in hot disputes about the modes and circumstances of her worship: I thought a discourse of the Christian life, which is the proper sphere of Christian zeal, might be a good expedient to take men off from those dangerous contentions which were kindled, and are fed and blown, by such as design our common ruin. For sure, did our people throughly understand what it is to be Christians indeed, and how much duty that implies, they could never find so much leisure as they do to quarrel and wrangle about trifles.

This, my Lord, is the sincere design of what here present to your Lordship; and, however it m succeed, I have this satisfaction, that I meant w and have expressed my good-will to this poor en

church, whose truly primitive constitution, pure and undefiled religion, I shall always admire and reverence; and, whatsoever her fate may be, I am chained to her fortunes by my reason and conscience, and shall ever esteem it more eligible to be crushed by her fall, which God avert, than to flourish and triumph on her ruins.

But among the many ill omens that threaten our church, there is one which seems to presage its prosperity; and that is, that such eminent stations in it, as your Lordship's, are so excellently supplied. For although whether the part you are designed for, be to grace her triumphs or her funeral, is known only to the sovereign Disposer of events; yet this, my Lord, all that wish well to our church conclude, that God bestowed you upon her as a token of love: for which they have sufficient warrant, even from the daily experience they have of the prudence and vigilance of your government; the piety, integrity, and generosity of your temper; of your invincible loyalty to your prince; your undaunted zeal for the reformed religion; and your grave and obliging deportment towards all you converse with. I shall trouble your Lordship no further, but conclude this address with that which I am sure is the hearty prayer of all your honest clergy, That the God of heaven would long continue your Lordship a blessing to the church and to this diocese, an honour to your sacred order and the noble stock you descend from: and if what

I here present, prove but so prosperous as to do some good in the world, and obtain your Lordship's acceptance, it will be a noble compensation of this well-meant endeavour. I am,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most humble

And most obedient servant,

JOHN SCOTT.

THE

PREFACE.

I SHALL not trouble the reader with a long apology for the publication of the ensuing treatise, though I might plead (as other authors do) the importunity of friends, whose judgments I very much reverence. For, to say the truth, I do by no means think that, in an affair of this nature, it is safe or fit for a man to be overborne by the persuasions of those, whose judgments he hath just cause to suspect may be bribed by their friendships: and therefore had I not hoped that, in such an age as this, (wherein, through our own divisions and debaucheries, both in opinion and practice, and the hellish contrivances of our enemies, we have such a dismal prospect of things before us,) these papers might be of some use to religion and the souls of men, I would never have troubled the world with them; but hoping they might, I have ventured, upon that reason, to publish them.

I have for some years been a sorrowful spectator of the black cloud that is gathering over my native country, and, I must confess, have not been without my share of the fears and anxieties of the age: but being at last quite sick of looking downwards upon this uncomfortable scene of things, I had no other way to relieve my oppressed thoughts, but to raise them above this miserable world, and entertain them with the comforts of religion, and the hopes of a better state beyond the grave; wherein, I thank God, I have found such rest and satisfaction of mind, as rendered my blackest apprehensions of the ensuing storm very tolerable. And now, because I would not eat my morsel alone, and

enjoy my satisfaction to myself, I have endeavoured, by this following treatise of heaven, and the way thither, to break and distribute it among my distressed neighbours; that so, by carrying their minds from these dismal expectations into the quiet and happy regions above, and directing their lives and actions thither, I might communicate to them the blessed art, how to live happily in a distracted world. And, methinks, when our present state is so perplexed and uncertain, we should be more than ordinarily concerned to make sure of something, and to provide for a future well-being, that so we may not be miserable in both worlds. As for the argument I have undertaken, I may, without breach of modesty, say, it is a great and a noble one; it is the Christian life, which, next to the angelical, approaches nearest to the life of God. But as for the management of it, all that I can say is this, I have employed my best thoughts and skill about it; and if, after this, I have any where wronged or misrepresented it, it is more my unhappiness than my fault. Perhaps it may be thought, that in the first three chapters I have discoursed more speculatively than it is fit in a book that is designed for common use and edification; but it may be, when the reader hath considered the nature of the arguments I have there handled, and how necessarily they fall in with my design, he will be convinced that it was unavoidable. And yet I doubt not, but with a little diligence and attention of mind, the plainest reader may be able to comprehend the main reason and evidence of what I drive at.

In the first place, I thought it would be necessary, in treating of the Christian life, to give some account of the blessed end it refers to, that so, from the nature of that, we might be the better able to judge of the necessity and usefulness of those means which Christianity prescribes in order to it. And this I have endeavoured in the first chapter; where I have only so far explained the nature of the heavenly state and felicities, as was necessary to light and conduct us through the ensuing design.

In the second place, I judged it would be no less expe-

dient to give some general account of what kinds of means are necessary to our obtaining this end; that so we might be convinced how requisite both the principal and instrumental parts of the Christian life are to our everlasting happiness. And this I have attempted in the second chapter; wherein, from the consideration of the vast distance there is between the pure and blessed state of heaven, and this corrupt and degenerate state of human nature, I have endeavoured to shew, that it is not only necessary for us to practise and acquire those Christian virtues, in the perfection whereof the heavenly bliss consists; but that to enable us to practise, acquire, and improve them, there are sundry other instrumental duties indispensably necessary; which duties, as I have there proved, are of no other use or significancy in religion, than as they are means of virtue and piety.

And having thus distributed the means into their proper kinds and order, I have, in the third chapter, treated largely of the first kind, to wit, the practice of the Christian virtues; in which, I confess, I have neither handled the particular virtues in their full extent and latitude, nor enforced them with all their moral reasons; that being done already to excellent purpose, in those two incomparable treatises of Holy Living and Dying, and of The Whole Duty of Man. Nor could I have done it without swelling this discourse, which is large enough already, into a volume too large for common use. And indeed all that was necessary to my purpose, was only so far to explain the nature of each particular virtue, as that the reader might thereby understand what is meant by them: but that which most concerned me, in pursuance of my main design, was to prove, that the practice of every virtue is an essential part of the Christian life, and a necessary means to the blessed end of it. And accordingly, as I have shewn from the express commands of our religion, our indispensable obligation to practise every virtue; so I have endeavoured to shew how, in the practice of it, we do naturally grow up to the heavenly state; as, on the contrary, how, in the course of a sinful

life, we do, by a necessary efficiency, gradually sink ourselves into the state of the damned. For I have proved at large, that there is something of heaven and hell in the very nature of each particular virtue and vice, and that in the perfection of these two opposite qualities consists the main happiness and misery of those two opposite states. From whence it will necessarily follow, that as in the practice of the one or the other we grow more virtuous or vicious; so proportionably we rise up towards heaven, or sink down towards hell, by a fatal tendency of nature. The truth of which is not only acknowledged by the generality of Christian writers, but also by the best and wisest of the heathen philosophers; though this, I think, is the first attempt that hath been made to derive the heavenly and the hellish states from the nature of the particular virtues and vices. I pray God, that what I have said may but engage some more skilful pen in the prosecution of this noble argument. For I know nothing in the world that can be more effectual to engage men to be substantially religious, to take them off from hypocrisy and formality, from all presumptuous hopes and false dependencies, than their being throughly convinced of this truth, that the eternal happiness or misery of souls is founded in their virtue or vice; and that there is as inseparable a connexion between grace and glory, sin and hell, as there is between fire and heat, frost and cold, or any other necessary cause and its effect. For if they were but throughly persuaded of this, they would easily discern what wretched nonsense it is, to think of going to heaven, or escaping hell, whilst they continue in any wilful course of disobedience to the laws of virtue.

Having thus treated at large of the first sort of means by which the end of our Christian life is to be obtained, I proceed, in the fourth chapter, which is the largest of all, to give an account of the second, viz. the instrumental duties of Christianity, which are enjoined us as means subservient to our practice, acquisition, and improvement of those heavenly virtues, in the perfection whereof our chief happiness consists. And for the more distinct handling of

these, I have considered men under a threefold state, with respect to the Christian life; first, as entering into it; secondly, as actually engaged in it; thirdly, as perfecting and improving themselves by perseverance in it: to each of which I have appropriated such of the instrumental duties as I conceive did more especially belong to them. It is true, some of the duties here treated of are not purely instrumental, but of a mixed nature; such as faith, prayer, actual dedication of our good works to God, &c. which are essential parts of divine worship, and, as such, do belong to those divine virtues, the perfection whereof makes a principal part of the everlasting happiness of souls. But here I have considered them only as means and instruments in the use of which we are to acquire and perfect those beatifical virtues. And of this sort of means I do not remember any one particular recommended in holy scripture, but what hath been here treated of. Upon some indeed I have insisted much more briefly than upon others, because I find them already largely accounted for in other practical books, and especially in those two excellent treatises above named; but those which they either cursorily touch, or take no notice of at all, I thought myself obliged to give a larger account of.

From the whole, I would recommend to the pious reader the consideration of the admirable structure and contrivance of the practical part of Christianity, which, having proposed to us an end so great and sublime, and so highly worthy of our most vigorous prosecutions, hath also furnished us with such choice and effectual means of all sorts to attain it. The consideration of which would be in itself a great inducement to me to believe Christianity a divine religion, though I were utterly unacquainted with its external evidence and motives of credibility. For it can never enter into my head, that such a rare and exquisite contrivance to make men good and happy could ever owe its original to the mere invention of a carpenter's son, and a company of illiterate fishermen. Especially considering how far it excels the moral precepts even of those divine philo-

sophers who believed a future state of a blessed immortality, and exercised their best wit in prescribing rules to guide and direct men thither.

And having given this large account of the instrumental duties of the Christian life, and also enforced the several divisions of them with proper arguments and motives, I thought fit to add a fifth chapter, wherein I have given some rules for the more profitable reading of this practical discourse, and also some general directions for the exercise of our private religion, in all the different states of the Christian life, together with certain forms of private devotion, fitted for each state. In which I have supposed, what I doubt is a very deplorable truth, viz. that the generality of Christians, after their initiation by baptism into the public profession of Christianity, are so unhappy as to be seduced, either through bad example or education, into a vicious state of life; and that consequently from thence they must take their first start into the thorough practice of Christianity. Not that I make the least doubt, but that there are a great many excellent Christians, who, by the blessing of God upon their pious education, have been secured from this calamity, and trained up from their infancy under a prevailing sense of God and religion; and therefore for such as these, as there is no need of that solemn method of repentance, prescribed in the first section of the fourth chapter, so neither is there of those first penitential prayers in this fifth chapter, which is accommodated to that state. For these persons have long since been actually engaged in the Christian life, and, as it is to be supposed, have made considerable improvements in it, and therefore as they are only concerned in the duties of the second and third states of the Christian life, so they are only to use the prayers which are fitted to those states, which, with some variation of those phrases which suppose the past course of our life to have been vicious, they may easily accommodate to their own condition. But the design of this discourse is not only to conduct them onwards in their way, who have already entered upon the Christian life, but also to reduce those to

it, who have been so unhappy as to wander into vicious courses; or rather, though it serves both purposes, it is wholly designed for the same persons, viz. to seek and bring back those lost sheep who have strayed from the paths of Christian piety and virtue, and then to lead them on, through all the intermediate stages, to the happy state of immortal pleasures at the end of them. And now, if what hath been said should, by the blessing of God, obtain its designed effect upon any person, I ask no other requital for all the pains it hath cost me, but his earnest prayers to God for me, that after my best endeavours to guide and direct him to heaven, I may not fall short of it myself.

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OF

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

CHAP. I.

Concerning the ultimate end of the Christian life.

IN order to our understanding what is the nature, use, and excellency of any means, it is necessary we should have a true and genuine notion of those peculiar ends which they drive at: for the nature of them, as they are means, consists in being serviceable to some end; but to what they are particularly serviceable must be collected from the nature of those particular ends whereunto they are directed. And therefore, till we know what those particular ends are, it is impossible we should know whether they are means or no; or, which is the same thing, whether they are serviceable to any end or purpose.

It being, therefore, the design of this work to explain the nature of the Christian life, it will be necessary (for the clearing of our way) to give some account of the blessed end for which it is intended; which will very much contribute to our right understanding of the great usefulness and subserviency of each part of it thereunto. Therefore,

I. I shall endeavour to shew what is the peculiar end of the Christian life.

II. Wherein the true nature of this end consists.

I. As for the end of the Christian life, we are assured from scripture, that it is no other but heaven itself, that state of endless bliss and happiness, which God hath prepared in the world above for the reception of all those, *who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality.* That this is the end of the Christian life is evident from hence, because it is every where proposed, by our Saviour and his apostles, as the chief good of a Christian, and the supreme motive to all Christian virtue. For so St. John, that bosom-favourite of our Saviour, assures us, that *this is the promise which Christ hath promised us, even eternal life,* 1 John ii. 25. And if we look into the Gospel of St. John, who hath more largely recorded our Saviour's sermons and discourses than any other evangelist, we shall find eternal life still proposed by him, as the supereminent promise, to encourage and persuade men to the profession and practice of Christianity. For so, John iv. 36, it is proposed by our Saviour, as that which is the harvest of a Christian, to which, like the husbandman's ploughing and sowing, all our care and endeavour is to be directed; *He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto eternal life.* Consonantly whereunto St. Paul tells us, that *he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting,* Gal. vi. 8. And this, as our Saviour tells us, is the great reward which he gives to all those that hear and follow him, John x. 27, 28; and this is the great argument which he every where insists on, that he that believeth hath *life everlasting,* that whosoever heareth his word hath *life everlasting,* and that his commandment is *life everlasting.* And Rom. vi. 22, *everlasting life*

1 Pet. iv. 11. and affirm, that it is to this purpose that we are chosen to be Christians, that we should be to the *praise of his glory*, Eph. i. 12. But that the glory of God is no distinct end from our being made partakers of the happiness of heaven, is as evident from hence, that this glory consists not in any thing that we can add or contribute to him, whose essential glory is so immense and secure, that there is nothing we can do, can either increase or diminish it; and there is no other glory can redound to him from any thing without, but what is the reflection of his own natural rays. He understands himself too well, to value himself either the more or the less for the praises or dispraises of his creatures. For he is enough of stage and theatre to himself, and hath the same satisfying prospect of his own glory, in the midst of all the loud blasphemies of hell, as among the perpetual hallelujahs of heaven. And having so, it cannot be supposed that he should enjoin us to praise and glorify him, for the sake of any good or advantage that can accrue to himself by it, or out of any other pleasure he takes in hearing himself applauded and commended by us, than he doth in any other act that is decent and reasonable in its own nature; but it is therefore he will have us praise him, because he knows it is for our good, and highly conduces, as it is a most reasonable action, to the perfection and happiness of our reasonable natures; because our praising him naturally excites us to imitate him, and to transcribe into our own natures those adorable perfections which we do so admire and extol in his. So that to pursue our own perfection and happiness, is to glorify God according to his own design and intention; who re-

quires us to glorify him for no other purpose, but that thereby we may glorify ourselves. And indeed our happiness is God's glory, even as all other worthy effects are the glory of their causes. It is he that gives being to it, and consequently he that is glorified by it. It being nothing but the resplendency of his own almighty goodness, or his own outstretched rays shining back upon himself. And therefore we aim at God's glory just as he himself doth, when we aim to be as happy as he would have us; that is, when we pursue heaven, and cooperate with his infinite goodness, whose great design is to advance us to that blessed condition, in which we shall glorify him for ever, and be everlasting monuments of his overflowing benignity. So that whether we call our last end heaven, or the glory of God, it is all but one and the same thing; since by obtaining heaven we shall glorify him according to his own design and intention. And this, I think, may suffice to shew what is the true ultimate end of the Christian life. But then,

II. It will be yet further necessary, for our clearing the way to the design in hand, to inquire what kind of happiness this is; which when we understand, we shall be the better able to comprehend what duties or means are necessary for the obtaining it. And this inquiry will be easily resolved, by considering the nature of those for whom it was prepared and intended. For all happiness consists in the free and vigorous exercise of the faculties of nature, about objects that are suitable to themselves. There is indeed a privative happiness, which is nothing but indolence, or freedom from pain and misery; and this consists not so much in the exercise, as

in the rest and quiet of the faculties. And herein the soft and restive Epicureans placed the whole happiness of a man: in which, I confess, they would not be very much mistaken, if there were no happiness belonging to a man beyond that animal and sensual one, in which the disciples of this atheistical philosopher placed their chief good. For the greatest part of the pleasures of sense, indeed, are merely privations of misery, and short reprieves from the griefs and troubles of a wretched life. For what else is our ease and rest, but only the removal of our pain and weariness? which being removed, the pleasure is presently over, and then we grow weary again of our rest and ease; till pain and weariness return and sweeten them, and give them a fresh and new relish. For when we are weary of rest, we are fain to recreate ourselves with action; and when we are weary of action, to refresh ourselves with rest; and so round again in the same circle. Thus the greatest part of the pleasure of eating and drinking consists in assuaging the pain of our hunger and thirst. For when this is over, you see the pleasure ceases; and till it returns again, every fresh morsel is but a new load to a tired digestion. So that, in short, the greatest part of those sensual felicities which we do here enjoy, are only short intermissions of the pains and uneasinesses of a wretched life. But if there were no other happiness belonging to a man, but what consists in not being sensible of misery, it were much more desirable to be a stone than a man; and the only way for him to be perfectly happy would be, to deprive himself of all sense and perception.

It is true, that which is positive in our happiness can never be perfectly enjoyed by us, without a per-

fect indolence and insensibility of pain; it being impossible for us to have a perfect sense of any thing, whilst we have the least touch or feeling of its contrary. But were happiness nothing else but a non-perception of misery, it would have no positive essence of reality of its own, which is directly contrary to all human experience. For we plainly feel, that our happiness hath in it, not only a rest from evil, but a grateful motion to good: and that as our pain and misery consist in an acute and sensible perception of such things as are most ungrateful to our natures; so pleasure or satisfaction consist in a vigorous perception of the contrary. So that besides the not being miserable, (which is not so properly an essential part of happiness, as a necessary disposition to it, without which the faculties of our natures will be indisposed to relish and perceive it,) there is a positive happiness, which, as I said before, consists in a constant, free, and vigorous exercise of the faculties about such objects as are most convenient and suitable to their natures. For happiness in the general includes perfection and pleasure, both which are necessarily included in such an exercise of the faculties: for then the faculties are perfect, when they are freely, constantly, and vigorously employed about such objects as are most congruous to their several natures; when they are recovered from all indispositions, whether natural or moral, to those proper motions and exercises for which they were framed; and do freely, constantly, and without any clog or interruption direct all their courses towards such objects as are their natural centres. And then the faculties are most pleased and delighted too, when they are most vigorously

exercised about that which is most suitable to them; when they are not only determined to such objects as are most agreeable to their natures, but do also act upon and exert themselves towards them with the greatest sprightliness and vigour.

These things I thought meet to premise concerning happiness in the general, as being very needful to the clearer resolution of the present inquiry, viz. wherein consists the heaven or happiness of a man. In short therefore, the proper heaven and happiness of a man, considered as a rational being, consists in the constant, free, and sprightful exercise of his faculties about such objects as are most convenient to his rational nature, which consisting wholly of understanding and will, that is, of a faculty of knowing, and a faculty of choosing, the most suitable objects of it are such, as are most worthy to be known, and most worthy to be chosen. When therefore the understanding is always vigorously exercised in seeing and contemplating the most glorious and excellent truths, and the will is always vigorously employed in choosing and embracing the most desirable goods, then is the whole rational nature happy. Now if you cast abroad your thoughts over the whole extent of being, you will presently find that there is nothing in it so worthy to be known and chosen as God, whose power being the source and fountain of all truth, that is, of all that either is or is possible, and whose nature being the subject of all rational perfection, wherein it originally resides, and from whence it is derived to all the rational creation; you must upon these accounts necessarily allow him to be infinitely the most worthy object in all the world of beings, for our understanding to contemplate,

and our will to choose. And if so, then the very life and quintessence of the heaven of a man, considered as a reasonable being, must needs consist in a close and intimate knowledge of God, and a free and uncontroverted choice of him.

But that we may more fully comprehend the nature of this happiness, it will be needful that we should more distinctly explain what these two essential acts of it do import, and what happiness is included in them. And,

I. The happiness of a man consists in a free and intimate knowledge of God. For our understanding hath naturally as strong an appetite to truth, as our stomach hath to food, and as grateful a relish of it, when it hath once discovered it, as an hungry man hath of a pleasant morsel. And though in this life its appetite is many times palled and deadened, partly through the difficulty of knowing, occasioned either by the natural indispositions of its organs, or the inveterate prejudices of a bad education; and partly by being continually employed in secular cares and pursuits, which do perpetually divert, and so by degrees wean it from its natural inclination to truth: yet when we go from this world, and leave these causes behind us, which give such a check to its appetite, doubtless its hunger after knowledge will immediately revive, and there will be no possibility of ever satisfying it without it.

Suppose we then the future world to be inhabited with a company of intellectual beings, that do all most vehemently gasp after the knowledge of truth: what can there be imagined more grateful to them, than to be admitted to the very fountain of all truth and reality, there to quench their thirst, and satisfy

their infinite desires, with the free and easy, but still fresh discoveries of his infinite glories and perfections? Where will they be able to fix their greedy eyes with comparably that pleasure and delight, as upon the mysterious Triune Divinity, which is the eternal author of all being, the root of all good, and the rule and source of all perfections? But then supposing, what is the case of these blessed contemplators, that their minds are so raised, and their apprehensions are rendered so unspeakably quick and sagacious, as that they can all know whatsoever they have a mind to, without the difficulty of study; and presently discern the dependence and connexion of things, without any puzzling discourse, or laborious deduction: with what incomparable satisfaction must they needs peruse that infinite volume of the divine being and perfections?

Now that in that blessed state they have unspeakably clearer and more perspicuous apprehensions of things than ever they had here, that noble passage of St. Paul assures us, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known:* that is, now our knowledge of divine things is very obscure and imperfect, they being shewn us, as it were, through a glass, on purpose to give us but a glimpse of them; but when we come to heaven, we shall look close upon them, and have a far clearer and more distinct apprehension of them. Then we shall know God as truly as he knows us, and have as real and certain apprehensions of his all-glorious being, as he hath of ours. So that in heaven, you see, the eyes of those blessed [illegible] inhabit it are so invigorated, that they

can gaze upon the sun without dazzling; contemplate the pure and immaculate glories of the Deity without being confounded with their brightness; and their understanding being thus exalted, they must needs apprehend more at one single view, than we can do in volumes of discourse, and tedious long trains of deduction.

And then enjoying, as they do, a most perfect repose, both from within and without them, they are never disturbed in their eager contemplations; which having such a vast horizon of truth and glory round about them, are still discovering farther and farther, and so continually entertained with fresh wonders and delights. What an infinite deal of pleasure then must that all-glorious object afford to such raised and elevated minds, which, like transparent windows, let in, without any labour or difficulty, all that divine and heavenly light which freely offers itself unto, and shines for ever round about them; and which, by every new discovery of God, and of these bottomless secrets and mysteries of his nature, are still enlarged to discover more, and still have new discoveries offering themselves, as fast as they are enlarged to receive them. This, of itself, is so great a part of heaven, that St. John himself seems to be at a loss how to imagine any heaven beyond it, 1 John iii. 2. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him*, that is, in glory and happiness, *for we shall see him as he is.* But then,

II. The heaven or happiness of a man consists also in a free and undistracted choice of God; that is, in choosing him for the rule and pattern of our

natures, and for the object of our love, adoration, and dependence; all which (as I shall shew hereafter) are beatifical acts, and do abundantly contribute to the happiness of reasonable creatures. For happiness (as hath been premised) consists not in rest, but in motion; and there is no motion can contribute to the happiness of any being, but what is suitable to its own nature. Now, what motion can be more suitable to the nature of a reasonable creature, than to love and adore the author of its being and well-being; to bow to the will of the Almighty Sovereign; and to imitate the perfections of the supreme standard and pattern of all reasonable beings; to rely and depend on his infinite power, that is always conducted by his infinite wisdom and goodness; all which are founded upon so many strong, evident, and undeniable reasons, that the very naming of them is sufficient to justify them to our faculties, and demonstrate them to be infinitely agreeable to the most fundamental principles of our reasonable nature. And being so, it is impossible but that of themselves they should be exceeding joyous and blissful: for as the sensitive nature is most gratified with those acts that have most of sense in them, so is the rational with those that have most of reason in them. And certainly those have most reason in them, which are terminated upon objects which most deserve them; and what objects can so well deserve to be acted upon by reasonable beings, as God? Or what acts can they so reasonably exert upon him, as those of love and adoration, homage and imitation, trust and dependence? But as no acts of sense can be very grateful to our sensitive nature, so long as we exert them either with re-

pugnance or indifferency, so neither can any acts of reason be to our rational; the pleasure of all acts, whether sensitive or rational, consisting (as I shewed before) in the sprightfulness and vigour of them. And this is the cause why men now find so little felicity in these most rational acts of godliness, because by their own bad customs they have rendered themselves averse, or at least very cold and indifferent to them, which necessarily renders us dead and listless in the exercise of them; and consequently causes them to go off with little gust, if not with an ungrateful relish. But even in this imperfect state, we find, by experience, that the more our corrupted nature discharges and disburdens itself of those vicious indispositions, which do so cramp and arrest it in these its heavenly operations, the more it is pleased still and delighted in them; yea, and that when it is so far inured to a godly life, as to be able to practise the several virtues of it, but with the same degree of activity and vigour as it was wont to do its most beloved lusts, it is unspeakably more pleased and satisfied; and finds more sweetness, by a thousand degrees, in its love and adoration, obedience and imitation of God, than ever it did in the highest relishes of epicurism and sensuality; that the more perfectly we love and adore, &c. the more of heaven we taste in these blessed acts; and that when, by a long and constant practice of them, we have once rendered them natural to us, we enjoy such an heaven upon earth, in the easy, free, and vigorous exercise of them, as we would not exchange for all the pleasures and felicities which the world can afford us. And yet, God knows, the most perfect state of godliness which we attain to here hath so

many degrees of imperfection in it, and in this we are so disturbed and interrupted by bodily indispositions, and the troubles and necessities of this present life, that from the joy and pleasure which results from it here, we can hardly guess at those ravishing felicities which will spring out of it hereafter: when we shall be perfectly released from all the encumbrances of flesh and blood, and sin; when we shall be translated into a free and quiet state, wherein we shall have nothing else to do, but only to know and love, obey and imitate, and have no imperfection, either natural or vicious, to clog or disturb us in this our beatifical employment. Wherein we shall act with all our vigour and might, and thrust forth the whole strength of our souls in every love and every obedience; so that every motion of our souls towards God shall have the vehemence of a rapture in it, without the violence. When, I say, we shall be eternally fixed in a state of such perfect freedom and activity, our happiness must needs be as large as our desires, and as great as our utmost capacity or power of acting upon God. For now we shall imitate the most perfect, and adore the most adorable, as much as ever we are able; that is, we shall perform with all our might and vigour the acts that are most agreeable to our reasonable nature: and in the utmost vigour of such acts (as I have already shewed) consists our utmost happiness.

Suppose we then a society of rational beings placed in such a state, wherein they have an object of infinite perfections always before them, and no evil from without or within to check or divert them from exerting all their powers upon him in the most reasonable actions: suppose them now to be moving

with unspeakable vigour and agility, like so many ever-living orbs about this their everlasting centre; to be as full of love and duty to him as ever their hearts can hold; to be copying his perfections, and adoring his excellencies with an uncontrollable freedom and alacrity, and breathing forth themselves to him in cheerful praises and rapturous hallelujahs; in a word, to be exercising themselves about him to their utmost strength and power, in all those blessed offices which his nature and their relation to him call for: suppose, I say, all this, and you have before ye that which is the very top and flower of the heaven of a reasonable creature; who in this blessed state is fixed, as it were, in his own proper element, where, without any let or disturbance, he freely moves and acts according to his most natural tendence and inclination.

And now, by this time, I think it is clear enough, that the main and principal part of the heaven of a man, considered as a reasonable creature, consists in knowing and choosing of God. But besides this, there are other blessed ingredients of heaven; the principal whereof is, the knowing and choosing those that are most like unto God; namely, the blessed Jesus in his human nature, and the holy angels and saints, who are all, in their several measures and degrees, the express and lively images of God. And therefore if to know and choose God be the supreme felicity of heaven, then doubtless the next to that is, to know and be acquainted with these blessed images of him, and freely to choose their company and conversation, and be entirely united to them in affection; without which, it would be no felicity to dwell in the same place with them. For to cohabit with

Jesus, and with saints and angels, and not be acquainted with and united to them in heart and affection, would be rather a burden than a pleasure. The happiness therefore of being in their society consists in knowing and choosing them. And this is every where implied, where our being in them is mentioned as a part of our heaven. Thus, 1 Thess. iv. 17. to *be ever with the Lord*, is the same thing with being *ever in heaven:* but then, it is to be ever with him upon choice: for so those words imply, Phil. i. 23. *I desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.* And accordingly this is mentioned by the apostle as a dear privilege of our being members of the Christian church, whereby we are entitled to the society of *holy myriads of angels, of the general assembly and church of the first-born, of God the judge of all, of the spirits of just men made perfect, and of Jesus the mediator of the new covenant*, Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24. And indeed this must needs be an inestimable happiness, not only to cohabit, but be acquainted with, and in heart and will united to this blessed and glorious company. For what soul that has any spark of cordial love to Jesus, the best friend of souls that ever was, any grateful remembrance of what he did and suffered for our sakes, would not esteem it a mighty felicity to be admitted into his presence, and to be an eyewitness of the happy change of his past woful circumstances? To see him that was so cruelly treated, so barbarously vilified, tortured and butchered for our sakes, raised to the highest pitch of splendour and dignity, to be head and prince of all the hierarchy of heaven, to be worshipped and celebrated throughout all the noble choir of archangels

and angels, and *spirits of just men made perfect?* Verily methinks had I only the privilege to look in and see my dear and blessed Lord surrounded with all this circle of glories, it would be a most heavenly consolation to me, though I were sure never to partake of it. The very communion I should have in the joys of my Master would be a kind of heaven at second-hand to me, and my soul would be wondrous happy by sympathizing with him in his felicity and advancement. But, oh! when that blessed Person shall not only permit me to see his glory, but introduce me into it, and make me partaker of it; when I shall not only behold his beloved face, but be admitted into his dear conversation, and dwell in his arms and embraces for ever; when I shall hear him record the wondrous adventures of his love, through how many woful stages he passed to rescue me from misery, and make me happy, and in the mean time shall have a most ravishing feeling of that happiness; how will my heart spring with joy and burn with love, and my mouth overflow with praises and thanksgiving to him!

And as our acquaintance with and choice of the blessed Jesus must needs contribute vastly to our happiness, so must also (though not in so high degree) our being intimately acquainted and united with saints and angels; who being not only endowed with large and comprehensive understandings, but also with perfect good nature, and most generous charity, must needs make excellent company. For as their goodness cannot but render their conversation infinitely free and benign, so their great knowledge must necessarily render it equally profitable and delightful. And then being so know-

ing as they are, they must needs be supposed to understand all the wise arts of endearment; and being so good, they must be also supposed to be continually practising them. And if so, what a heavenly conversation must theirs be, the scope whereof is the most glorious knowledge, and the law whereof is the most perfect friendship! Who would not be willing to leave a foolish, froward, and ill-natured world, for the blessed society of these wise friends and perfect lovers! And what a felicity must it be, to spend an eternity in such a noble conversation! Where we shall hear the deep philosophy of heaven communicated with mutual freedom in the wise and amicable discourses of angels and glorified spirits; who, without any reserve, or affectation of mystery, without passion or interest, or peevish contention for victory, do freely philosophize, and mutually impart the treasures of each other's knowledge. For since all saints there are great philosophers, and all philosophers perfect saints, we must needs suppose knowledge and goodness, wisdom and charity, to be equally intermingled throughout all their conversation; and being so, what can be imagined more delightful! When therefore we shall leave this impertinent and unsociable world; and all our good old friends that are gone to heaven before us shall meet us as soon as we are landed upon the shore of eternity, and, with infinite congratulations for our safe arrival, shall conduct us into the company of the patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, and introduce us into an intimate acquaintance with them, and with all those brave and generous souls who by their glorious examples have recommended themselves to the world; when we shall

be familiar friends with angels and archangels, and all the courtiers of heaven shall call us brethren, and bid us welcome to their Master's joy, and we shall be received into their glorious society with all the tender endearments and caresses of those heavenly lovers; what a mighty addition to our happiness will this be!

There are indeed some other additions to the happiness of heaven; such as the glory and magnificence of the place, which is the highest heaven, or the upper and purer tracts of the ether, which our Saviour calls *paradise*, Luke xxiii. 43. and St. Paul the *third heaven*, 2 Cor. xii. 2. both which, in the phrase of that age, bespeak it to be a place of unspeakable glory: for so the Jews do commonly call this blessed seat the *third* or *angel-bearing* region of heaven, by which they denote it to be the place of the King of the whole world, where his most glorious courtiers do reside; and they also call it *paradise*, in allusion to the earthly paradise of Eden; because as that was the garden of this lower world, so this is of the whole creation. And though we have no exact description of this place in scripture, and that perhaps because no human language can describe it; yet since God hath chosen it for the everlasting theatre of bliss and happiness, we may thence reasonably conclude, that he hath most exquisitely furnished it with all accommodations requisite to a most happy and blissful life.

Besides which also, there is the everlasting duration of it, which is another great accession to its happiness. That such is the nature of its enjoyments, as that they do not, like all other pleasures, spend and waste in the fruition; that though it will be al-

ways feeding our faculties with new delights, yet it will never be exhausted, but be always equally, because infinitely, distant from a period. So that its happiness consisting of an infinite variety of pleasure extended to an infinite duration, it will be impossible for those that enjoy it to be either cloyed with the repetition of it, or tormented with the fear of losing it.

But these two last I only mention, because they do not so properly belong to our present argument; which is only to explain the nature of heaven so far as is necessary to the right understanding of the nature of those means by which it is to be attained.

Now from what hath been said concerning this great end of the Christian life, these two things are to be inferred concerning the nature of it.

I. That the main of heaven consists not so much in any outward possession, as in an inward state and temper. For though heaven be doubtless a most glorious place, and all its blessed inhabitants do possess and hold it by an everlasting tenure; yet it is a great mistake to imagine that the main happiness of heaven consists in living for ever in a glorious place, which, separated from all the rest of heaven, would be but a poor and hungry kind of happiness. For life is no otherwise a happiness, than as it is the principle of all our pleasant and grateful perceptions; and if we could live for ever without perceiving, it would be the same thing to us, as if we were nothing but a company of everlasting stones and trees; and what great matter would it signify to live for ever in a glorious place, unless we could be for ever affected by it with a delightful sense and perception: which is impossible;

because all delightful sense (as hath already been proved) arises out of the vigorous exercise of our faculties about such objects as are suitable to them; but what can there be in the most glorious place so suitable to a rational mind and will, as to keep them for ever vigorously employed and exercised about it? It may indeed for a while employ the mind in an eager contemplation of its new and surprising beauties; but how soon would the mind disrelish it, were it to be its only entertainment for eternity! And as for the will, what would a fine place signify to it, if it were not replenished with such objects as are suitable to its own options? And indeed there is nothing that can everlastingly gratify a rational mind and will, but what has in it such an infinity of truth as is everlastingly knowable, and such an infinity of goodness as is everlastingly desirable; or, which is the same thing, nothing but what hath truth enough in it for the one to be vigorously contemplating for ever; and nothing but what hath goodness enough in it for the other to be as vigorously loving, adoring, and imitating for ever. And such an infinitude of truth and goodness is no where to be found but in God. But God, as well as the place and duration of heaven, being an object that is external to us, neither is nor can be a happiness to us, unless we act upon him, and freely exercise our faculties about him; unless we know him, and love him, &c. So that that which felicitates all is our own internal act; it is by this that we enjoy heaven, and perceive all the pleasures of it. It is not by being in heaven that men are constituted happy, but by vigorously exerting their faculties upon the heavenly objects: for without this, to be in heaven

or out of it would be indifferent to us. The happiness of heaven therefore consists in a state of heavenly action; in being so attempered and connaturalized to the objects of heaven, as to be always acting upon, and cheerfully employing our faculties about them. For as there is no pleasure in acting coldly upon suitable objects, so there is pain and trouble in acting vigorously upon unsuitable ones. And therefore to make heaven itself a happiness to us, it is necessary not only that we should act vigorously upon the objects of it, but that we should so act from a suitableness of temper to them: that we should contemplate God, submit to his will, adore and imitate his perfections, from a godlike temper and disposition. For otherwise these acts will be penances instead of pleasures to us; and the more intensely we exert them, the more painful they will be. And if we were in heaven, all that heavenly exercise in which the happiness of it consists would be but a torment and vexation to us, unless we had a heavenly temper. For as the parts of matter can never rest, but do move about in a perpetual whirlpool, till they hit into a place or interstice that is of the same form and figure with them; so there is nothing can rest in heaven but what is heavenly. All that is otherwise rebounds and flies off of its own accord, and can never acquiesce there, till it is of the same form, and temper, and disposition with it. From hence therefore it is evident, that the happiness of a man in heaven consists not so much in the outward glory of the place, as in the inward state of his own mind, which, from a suitableness of temper to the heavenly objects, doth always freely employ and exercise its faculties about them.

II. That the heavenly state is nothing else but the perfection of all heavenly virtue. For it hath been already proved, that heaven consists in a clear and intimate knowledge, and a free and uncontested choice of God, and of those blessed beings that resemble him; and these two comprehend all heavenly virtue. So that the difference between the state of grace and glory is not in kind, but in degree: for grace is the seed of glory, and glory is the maturity of grace. It is knowledge exalted above all error and prejudice, above all difficulty or obscurity of apprehension; it is love strained from all repugnancies of flesh and spirit, and refined into a pure celestial flame; it is obedience to, and imitation of God, perfectly separated from all sinful defects, and freed from the clog of counter-striving principles; it is adoration of and dependency upon him, without the least degree of indisposition or despondency; in a word, it is a free and uncontrolled motion of all the heavenly virtues together, in which they are every one most vigorously exerted, without the least check or impediment. This therefore being the state of heaven, as is evident from what hath been discoursed, it hence follows, that the main difference between virtue and heaven is only gradual; that virtue is the beginning of heaven, and heaven is the perfection of virtue. And if so, then as the lowest degree of true virtue is a step heavenwards, so every farther degree is a nearer approach towards the heavenly state. So that as we grow in grace, and proceed from one degree of virtue to another, we draw nearer and nearer to that blessed condition in which we shall be all pure virtue, without any sinful alloy

or intermixture. And this is the true state and condition of heaven.

CHAP. II.

Concerning the means by which this great end of the Christian life is to be attained.

IT is to be considered, that the great design of Christianity being to advance our natures to such a sublime degree of purity and perfection, as is requisite to capacitate us for the enjoyment of a heavenly bliss, it was necessitated, in order hereunto, to strain our duty to a greater height than any preceding law had done before it. For the end of all God's laws is the happiness of his subjects; and therefore that they may be effectual means to promote this end, it is necessary that the duties they enjoin should be such as the nature of our happiness requires. Now in the first state of our nature, which was that of innocence; we seem to have been designed only for a terrestrial paradise, that is, to enjoy the pleasures of a pure mind inhabiting a sensitive and animal body; and therefore had we stood, (which God foresaw we should not, and therefore designed us for a more raised and heavenly condition,) our happiness would have been what it is now in this world, though in a higher degree, viz. a compound of spiritual and bodily delights, to be enjoyed in a state of earthly immortality, which would have been of a much inferior nature to that pure state of spiritual happiness whereunto we are now designed and directed: and to serve this former end, in the possession of which man was placed in the state of

innocence, God gave him the law of nature, which seems to have been nothing else but only right reason dictating to us what is necessary to be done, in order to this our earthly happiness. And accordingly the duties of this law were of a much lower strain than the duties of Christianity; they being intended for the means and instruments of a much lower happiness. For in this our earthly and animal state, right reason could require nothing of us but what was subservient to our earthly and animal felicity; which was only a mixture of bodily and mental, sensitive and rational pleasure; and nothing could be good for us but what tended thereunto, nothing evil but what did obstruct and oppose it. But now that our happiness is placed in another world, and in such vastly different enjoyments from those of a terrestrial paradise, we must proceed upon other principles: for now every action is good or bad, wise or foolish, as it serves or hinders our happiness in the world to come. And therefore it is highly reasonable that now we should live at a different rate than what we were obliged to in that animal state wherein we were first created; that we should submit our earthly to our heavenly interest, and renounce the joys and pleasures of this life, whensoever they stand in competition with the spiritual felicities of the life to come. Now we are no longer to look upon this world as our native country, but as a foreign land; and so we are to reckon ourselves strangers and pilgrims upon earth; and accordingly to use the conveniences of this life as strangers do their inns, not to abide or take up our habitation in them, but only to bait and away, and refresh ourselves, that so we may be the better enabled to per-

form our journey to the eternal world. For the scene of our happiness being shifted from an earthly immortality to an heavenly; and consequently the happiness itself being now much more sublime and pure and spiritual than it would have been, had it not continued earthly; it is necessary that our nature should be exalted with it, and that we should be raised as high above the condition of mere earthly creatures, as that is above the rank and quality of an earthly happiness; otherwise it will be impossible for us to relish and enjoy it.

Now every agent hath need of more or fewer means proportionably as he is farther off or nearer to the end he drives at. As for instance, the husbandman that hath a fat and fruitful soil to sow his seed in, is nearer to the attaining of a good harvest, than he that hath a barren or stony ground to work upon; and therefore hath much less to do. For whereas the latter, before he can plough and sow, must manure his ground, and gather out the stones of it; the former needs only plough up the fertile earth, and cast his seed into it. Or to come closer to the case in hand; a man that is merely ignorant is in a much nearer capacity of true knowledge, than he whose mind is altogether prejudiced with erroneous principles; and therefore needs much fewer helps and means to attain it: for his mind being perfectly disengaged, is like a fair paper, on which as there is nothing writ, so there is nothing to be blotted out; so that all that he hath to do is to inquire after and receive the truth when it is fairly proposed to him. But as for the prejudiced man, he hath a great deal to unlearn, before he can be capable of learning; a great many false principles to be expunged, before

ever the true notions of things can be imprinted on his understanding.

If therefore we would take a true account of all those means that are necessary to our attaining of heaven, we must consider what a vast distance we are from it in this corrupt and degenerate state of our nature. If we were in a state of indifference between virtue and vice, we should be much nearer heaven than we are: for then, as we should be without those heavenly virtues, in the free exercise whereof the state of heaven consists; so we should be without all that repugnance and aversation to them which renders them so difficultly attainable; and our nature, being already in an equilibrium, would by the least overweight of motion be presently inclined to virtue and goodness. But, alas! in this corrupt state whereinto we are sunk, our nature runs evil-wards with a very strong and prevailing bias; and is not only void of virtue, but averse to it. And this sets us at a far greater distance from the blessed end of our religion, than otherwise we should be: for every degree of vicious inclination that is in us, is a remove from heaven, a descent from that perfection of virtue wherein the heavenly blessedness consists. And if so, how remote from heaven are the generality of men in the beginning of their progress thither; when to their natural corruption they have superadded by their sinful courses so many inordinate inclinations, and inveterate, sinful habits; when by a long series of wicked actions, they have raised and blown up their concupiscence into such raging flames of lust as generally they do! And being thus far gone back from our end, there are sundry means, which otherwise

would have been perfectly needless and superfluous, that are now become absolutely necessary thereunto. For had we begun our progress towards heaven from a state of indifferency between virtue and vice, we had had no more to do but to practise those several virtues of religion, of which the heavenly life and state consists; to love and to contemplate, to adore and to obey God, and behave ourselves justly and charitably towards one another; all which would have been so easy, that we should have had no occasion of any instrumental duties to facilitate them to us. Whereas now starting heavenwards, as we generally do, from a most corrupt and degenerate state, there are sundry other means which we must use as instruments that are necessary to our acquiring and persevering in the virtues of the heavenly life; to our conquering the difficulties, and killing the vicious aversations of our natures against them: all which would have been needless, at least in a great measure, had not our nature been so depraved and corrupt as it is.

So that as the case now stands with us, there are two sorts of means that are necessary to our obtaining of heaven; the first is, the practice of those heavenly virtues, in the perfection whereof consists the state of heaven; the second is, the practice of certain instrumental duties, which are necessary to our acquiring those heavenly virtues, and overcoming the difficulties of them. The first sort of these are the proximate means, those which directly and immediately respect the great and ultimate end; the second, the more remote means, which immediately respect those means that immediately respect the end. The first is like the art of the builder,

which immediately respects the house; the second, like the art of the smith, which immediately respects the means and instruments of building.

I. One sort of means necessary to the obtaining of heaven, and that which more directly and immediately respects it, is the practice of those virtues in the perfection whereof the heavenly life consists. For we find by experience, that all heavenly virtues are to be acquired and perfected only by practice; that as all bad dispositions are acquired and improved into habits by bad practices and customs, so are all the contrary virtuous ones by the contrary practices. For religion proceeds in the methods of nature, and carries us on from the acts to the dispositions, and from the dispositions to the habits of virtue. And by the same method the divine grace which accompanies religion does ordinarily work its effects upon the spirits of men, not by an instantaneous infusion of virtuous habits into the will, but by persuading them to the practice of those virtues that are contrary to their vicious habits, and to persist in the practice of them till they have mortified those habits, and throughly habituated and inured themselves to these. So that the grace of God is like a graff, which though it is put into a stock which is quite of another kind, doth yet make use of the faculties and juices of the stock, and so by cooperating with them converts it by degrees into its own nature. And this is exactly agreeable to the common experience of men, who, in the beginning of their reformation, are so far from acting virtuously from habit and inclination, that it goes against the very grain of their nature, and they would much rather return to their vicious courses, if they were

not chased and pursued by the terrors of an awakened conscience; and when afterwards they come to act upon a more ingenuous principle, yet still they find in themselves a great averseness and reluctancy to it, and it is a great while usually ere they arrive to a habit or facility of acting virtuously. But then by perseverance in the practice of virtue, they are more and more inclined and disposed to it, and so by degrees it becomes easy and natural to them. If therefore we would ever arrive to that perfection of virtue which the heavenly state implies, it must be by the practice of virtue, by a continual training and exercising ourselves in all the parts of the heavenly life, which, by degrees, will wear off the difficulty of it, and adapt and familiarize our nature to it. Ἃ γὰρ δεῖ μανθάνοντας ποιεῖν, ταῦτα ποιοῦντες μανθάνομεν. "Those things which they that learn ought to "do, they learn by doing them." Thus we learn devotion by prayer, submission to God by denying ourselves, charity by giving alms, and meekness by forgiving injuries. And we may as reasonably expect to commence learned without study, as virtuous without the practice of virtue. Since therefore the formal happiness of our reasonable natures consists in the perfection of all the heavenly virtues, and it is by these alone that we can relish and enjoy the blissful objects of heaven; it hence follows, that the practice of those virtues is the most direct and immediate means to obtain the blessed end of our religion. But then,

II. Another sort of means necessary to our obtaining of heaven consists of certain instrumental duties, by which we are to acquire, improve, and perfect these heavenly virtues. What these means

are, will be hereafter largely shewn: all that I shall say of them at present is, that they are such as are no farther good and useful, than as they are the means of heavenly virtue, and do tend towards the acquiring, improving, and perfecting it. For the whole duty of man may be distributed into these two generals, viz. the religion of the end and the religion of the means. The religion of the end contains all that heavenly virtue wherein the perfection and happiness of human nature consists; and this the apostle distributes into three particulars, viz. sobriety, righteousness, and godliness. The religion of the means comprehends all that duty which does either naturally or by institution respect and drive at this religion of the end; and that all other duty, that is not itself a natural branch and part of it, doth respect and drive at it, the apostle assures us, when he tells us, that the gospel, or grace of God, was revealed from heaven for this very purpose, to teach us to *deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.* And if we do not use the religion of the means to this purpose, it is altogether useless and insignificant. For the purpose of all religious duties is either,

1. To reconcile men to God, and God to them; or,

2. To perfect the human nature; or,

3. To entitle men to heaven; or,

4. To qualify and dispose them for the heavenly life. To neither of which the religion of the means is any farther useful, than as it produces and promotes in us those heavenly virtues which are implied in the religion of the end. For,

I. It is no further useful towards the reconciling us to God, and God to us. For there can be no hearty reconciliation between adverse parties, without there be a mutual likeness and agreement of natures. Now the *carnal mind*, (which includes all that is repugnant to the heavenly virtues,) the apostle tells us, *is enmity against God*, Rom. viii. 7. that is, hath a natural antipathy to the purity and goodness of the divine nature. And this antipathy, the same apostle tells us, is founded in our wicked works, Coloss. i. 21. So that though we should practise never so diligently all that is contained in the religion of the means, though we should pray, and hear, and receive sacraments, &c. with never so much zeal and constancy; yet all this will be insignificant, as to the reconciling our natures to God, unless it destroy in us that carnal mind and those wicked works which render us so averse to his goodness. And though God bears a hearty good-will to all that are capable of good, and embraces his whole creation with the outstretched arms of his benevolence; yet he cannot be supposed to be pleased with or delighted in any, but such as resemble him in those amiable graces of purity and goodness for which he loves himself. For he loves not himself merely because he is himself, (which would be a blind instinct, rather than a reasonable love,) but because he is good; and he loves himself above all other things, because he knows himself to be the highest and most perfect good: and consequently he loves all other things proportionably as they approach and resemble him in goodness. And indeed, if he loved us for any other reason besides that for which he loves himself, he would not have infinite reason to love

himself; because he would not have that reason to love himself, for which he loves and takes delight in us. Since therefore there is nothing but our resemblance of God can reconcile him to us; and since our resemblance of him consists in virtue and true goodness, it hence follows, that all the religion of the means is insignificant to our reconciliation with God, if it doth not render us truly virtuous. So that till this is effected, there is so vast a gulph between God and us, that neither we can go to him, nor he come to us; and unless he alter his nature by becoming impure as we are impure, or we alter ours by becoming pure as he is pure, there will be so immense a distance between him and us, as that it is impossible we should ever meet and agree. So that what the prophet saith of sacrifice may be truly affirmed of all religion of the means, *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?* Will he be reconciled upon our bare believing, praying, or receiving sacraments? &c. No, no; *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Micah vi. 7, 8.

II. This religion of the means is of no farther use as to the perfecting our natures, than as it is instrumental to produce and promote in us those heavenly virtues which are implied in the religion of the end. For, doubtless, to be a perfect man, is to live up to the highest principle of human nature, which is reason; and till we are once released from the slavery of sense and passion, and all our powers of action are so subdued to this superior principle as

to be wholly regulated by it, and we choose and refuse, and love and hate, and hope and fear, and desire and delight, according as right reason directs, we are in a maimed and imperfect condition. Now what else is virtue but a habit of living according to the laws of reason, or of demeaning ourselves towards God, ourselves, and all the world, as best becomes rational beings placed in our condition and circumstances? And till we are in some measure arrived to this, our nature is so far from being perfect, that it is the most wretched and confused thing in the whole world; a mere undistinguished chaos, where *frigida cum calidis*, sense and reason, brute and man, are shuffled together without any order, like a confounded heap of ruins. And therefore as for this religion of the means, it will be altogether insignificant to the perfection of our natures, unless by the practice of it we do acquire a habit of acting according to the law of our reason, which habit includes all heavenly virtue. For constantly to know and do what is best and most reasonable, is the very crown and perfection of every reasonable nature; and therefore, so far as our faith and consideration, our sorrow for sin, and the other instrumentals of religion, promote this heavenly habit in us, so far are they perfective of our nature, and no farther.

III. This religion of the means is of no farther use to us, as to the entitling us to heaven, than as it is productive of those heavenly virtues which the religion of the end implies. For our title to heaven depending wholly upon God's promise, must immediately result from our performance of those conditions upon which he hath promised it; which till we have done, we can have no more claim or title to

it than if he had never promised it at all. But the sole condition upon which he hath promised it is universal righteousness and goodness; for so, *without holiness*, we are assured, that *no man shall see God*; and Matt. v. our Saviour entails all the beatitudes of heaven upon those heavenly virtues of *purity of heart, benignity of temper*, &c. So also, Rom. ii. 7. the promise of eternal life is limited to our *patient continuance in well doing*. And that we may know beforehand what to trust to, our Saviour plainly tells us, that *not every one that cries, Lord, Lord*, that make solemn prayers and addresses to me, *shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven:* and, *This is the will of God*, saith the apostle, *even our sanctification;* that is, our being purged from all impurities of flesh and spirit, and inspired with all heavenly virtues. And the apostle expressly enumerates those virtues upon which our entrance into eternal life is promised, 2 Pet. i. 5—8. *Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound*, saith he, *they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ:* that is, that you shall receive the proper fruit of that knowledge, which is eternal life: for thus, ver. 11. he goes on; *For so*, or upon this condition, *an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* So that unless our faith purifies our hearts, and works by love; unless our sorrow for

sin works in us repentance, or a change of mind; unless our prayers raise in us divine and heavenly affections; that is, unless we so practise the duties of the religion of the means, as thereby to acquire the virtues of the religion of the end, it will be all as insignificant to our title to heaven, as the most indifferent actions in the world.

IV. This religion of the means is of no farther use to the disposing and qualifying us for heaven, than as it is an effectual means of the religion of the end; which is a perfectly distinct consideration from the former: for it would be no advantage to us to have a right to heaven, unless we were antecedently qualified and disposed for it: because pleasure, which is a relative thing, implies a correspondence and agreement between the object and the faculty that tastes and enjoys it. But in the temper of every wicked mind there is a strong antipathy to the pleasures of heaven; which being all chaste, and pure, and spiritual, can never agree with the vitiated palate of a base and degenerous soul. For what concord can there be between a spiteful and devilish spirit, and the fountain of all love and goodness? between a sensual and carnalized one, that understands no other pleasures but only those of the flesh, and those pure and virgin spirits that neither eat nor drink, but live for ever upon wisdom, and holiness, and love, and contemplation? Certainly, till our mind is contempered to the heavenly state, and we are of the same disposition with God, and angels, and saints, there is no pleasure in heaven that can be agreeable to us. For, as for the main, we shall be of the same temper and disposition when we come into the other world, as we are when we leave this;

it being unimaginable how a total change should be wrought in us merely by passing out of one world into another. And therefore as in this world it is likeness that does congregate and associate beings together, so doubtless it is in the other too. So that if we carry with us thither our wicked and devilish dispositions, (as we shall doubtless do, unless we subdue and mortify them here,) there will be no company fit for us to associate with, but only the devilish and damned ghosts of wicked men, with whom our wretched spirits, being already joined by a likeness of nature, will mingle themselves as soon as ever they are excommunicated from the society of mortals. For whither should they flock, but to the birds of their own feather? With whom should they associate, but with those malignant spirits to whom they are already joined by a community of nature? So that supposing that when they land in eternity, it were left to their own liberty to go to heaven or hell, into the society of the blessed or the damned, it is plain that heaven would be no place for them, that the air of that bright region of eternal day would never agree with their black and hellish natures. For, alas! what should they do among those blessed beings that inhabit it, to whose godlike natures, divine contemplations, and heavenly employments, they have so great a repugnancy and aversation? So that besides the having a right to heaven, it is necessary to our enjoying it, that we should be antecedently disposed and qualified for it. And it being thus, God hath been graciously pleased to make those very virtues the conditions of our right to heaven, which are the proper dispositions and qualifications of our spirits for it; that so with

one and the same labour we might entitle ourselves to, and qualify ourselves to enjoy it.

Now (as we shewed you before) the condition of our right to heaven is our practising those heavenly virtues which are implied in the religion of the end; and as the religion of the means no farther entitles us to heaven, than as it produces and promotes in us those heavenly virtues, so it no farther qualifies us for it. For when the soul goes into eternity, it leaves the religion of the means behind it, and carries nothing with it but only those heavenly virtues and dispositions which it here acquired by those means. For as for faith and consideration, hearing of God's word, and receiving of sacraments, &c. they are all but scaffolds to that heavenly building of inward purity and goodness; and when this is once finished for eternity, then must those scaffolds all go down, as things of no farther use or necessity. But as for the graces of the mind, they are to stand for ever, to be the receptacles and habitations of all heavenly pleasure. And hence the apostle tells us, that of those three Christian graces, faith, hope, and charity, charity (which, in the largest sense of it, comprehends all heavenly virtue) is the greatest; because the two former, being but means of charity, shall cease in heaven, and be swallowed up for ever in vision and enjoyment; but *charity*, saith he, *never faileth*, 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

By all which it is apparent, that the religion of the means is no farther useful to us, than as it is apt to produce and promote in us those heavenly virtues, the practice of which is the most direct and immediate means to the ultimate end of a Christian. Wherefore, as a man may knock and file, and yet be

no mechanic, though the hammer and file with which he does it are very useful tools to the making of any curious machine; so a man may pray, and hear, and receive sacraments, &c. and yet be a very bungler in the blessed trade of a heavenly life. For though it is true, these are excellent means of heavenly living, yet as the art of the mechanic consists not in using his tools, but in using them in such a manner as is necessary to the perfecting and accomplishing his work; so the art of one that pretends to the heavenly life consists not barely in praying and hearing, &c. but in using those means with that religious skill and artifice, which is necessary to render them effectually subservient to the ends of piety and virtue.

And thus I have given a general account of the means which are necessary to our obtaining of heaven, and which, as I have shewed, are either such as tend more directly and immediately to it, or such as more remotely respect it. The first is, the practice of those heavenly virtues in the perfection whereof the happiness of heaven consists: the second is, the practising of those duties which are necessary to our acquiring and perfecting those heavenly virtues. And of these two parts consists the whole Christian life; which takes in not only all those virtues that are to be practised by us in heaven, but also all those duties by which we are to overcome the difficulty of those virtues, and to acquire and perfect them. The first of these, for distinction sake, we will call the *heavenly part of the Christian life*, it being that part of it which we shall lead in heaven, after we have learned it here upon earth: the second I shall call the *warfaring*, or

militant part of the Christian life, which is peculiar to our earthly state, wherein we are to contend and strive with the manifold difficulties which attend us in the exercise of those heavenly virtues. Both which, I conceive, are implied in those words of the apostle, Phil. i. 27. *Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel:* where the Greek word πολιτεύεσθε, which we render, *let your conversation be*, strictly signifies, *behaving ourselves as citizens;* or which, if we may have leave to coin a word, may be fitly rendered, *Citizen it as becometh the gospel.* For the word implies, that those of whom he speaks were denizens of some free city; for so the word πολίτευμα, which, Phil. iii. 20. is rendered *conversation*, strictly denotes a *citizenship*, from πολίται, *citizens;* and is of the same import with πολιτεία, which, Acts xxii. 28. is translated a *freedom*, i. e. of the city of Rome; which denotes the state and condition of those, who, though they dwelt out of that city, and sometimes remote from it, had yet the *jus civitatis Romanæ*, the privileges of it belonging to them. For thus Cicero describes it: *Omnibus municipibus duas esse patrias, unam naturæ, alteram juris, Catonis exemplo, qui Tusculi natus, in populi Romani societatem susceptus est:* i. e. "All "such as are made free of the city have two coun-"tries, one of nature, the other of law; as Cato, for "instance, who was born at Tusculum, and after-"wards admitted a citizen of Rome." Which exactly agrees with the nature of this heavenly πολίτευμα, or *citizenship*, which the apostle here attributes to Christians, who, though they belong at present to another country, and live a great way off from the heavenly city, have as yet no *domicilium*

in urbe, no actual possession of any of its blessed mansions; are notwithstanding free denizens of it, and have, by covenant, a right to all those blessed privileges which its inhabitants do actually enjoy. From whence it is evident, that the πολιτεύεσθε in that text refers to their being citizens of heaven, and as such it earnestly exhorts them to behave themselves; to live as those who, being now in a remote country, are yet συμπολῖται τῶν ἁγίων, as the apostle expresses it, Eph. ii. 19. i. e. *fellow-citizens with the saints above;* that are connaturalized with them into that heavenly commonwealth. And being thus understood, the apostle's advice will comprehend in it both those kinds of means which I have before described. For, to live as citizens of heaven, is, first, to live like those who are the inhabitants of heaven, to imitate their blessed manners and behaviour, in doing the will of God upon earth, as it is done by them in heaven; and this takes in the practice of all those heavenly virtues of which the religion of the end consists. Secondly, to live like those that have a πολίτευμα, or citizenship, in heaven, that are entitled by covenant to the privileges and immunities of it, but are as yet to win its possession by a continual warfare and contention with those manifold difficulties and oppositions which lie in our way to it: and this takes in the practice of all those duties in which the religion of the means consists. To live like Christians therefore, or *as becomes the gospel*, is to live in the continual use of both kinds of the means of happiness. So that the Christian conversation consisting of these two, is the only full and adequate means by which heaven can be obtained.

But that I may make this more fully appear, I shall consider these two parts of it distinctly, and endeavour to shew how effectually each of them doth contribute in its kind to our obtaining the happiness of heaven. And, first, I shall begin with the proximate means, viz. The practice of all those heavenly virtues which are implied in the religion of the end, and do make the heavenly part of the Christian life.

CHAP. III.

Concerning the heavenly part of the Christian life, which is the proximate means of obtaining heaven; shewing what virtues it consists of, and how much every virtue contributes to the happiness of heaven.

VIRTUE in the general consists in a suitable behaviour to the state and capacities in which we are placed. Now man, who is the subject of that virtue we are here discoursing of, is to be considered under a threefold capacity. The

First is, Of a rational animal: The

Second, Of a rational animal related to God: The

Third, Of a rational animal related to all other creatures.

And these are the only capacities of virtue that are in human nature: so that all the virtues we are obliged to, and capable of, consist in behaving ourselves suitable to the state and condition of rational animals, that are related to God and their fellow-creatures.

By which three capacities of our nature, the virtue or suitableness of behaviour which we stand obliged to is distinguished into three kinds, viz.

The human,
The divine, and
The social.

Human virtue consists in behaving ourselves suitably to the state and capacity of mere rational animals.

Divine virtue consists in behaving ourselves suitably to the condition of rational animals related to God.

Social virtue consists in behaving ourselves suitably to the capacity of rational animals related to their fellow-creatures, but especially to rational creatures that are of the same class and society with us.

That I may therefore proceed more distinctly in this argument, I shall endeavour to shew what those virtues of the Christian life are, which are proper to a man in each of those capacities; and how much each of those virtues contributes to the happiness of heaven.

SECT. I.

Concerning those human virtues which belong to a man as he is a reasonable animal shewing that they are all included in the heavenly part of the Christian life, and that the practice of them effectually conduces to our future happiness.

FIRST, we will consider man in the capacity of a mere rational animal, that is, compounded of contrary principles, viz. spirit and matter, or a rational soul and human body; by which composition he is, as it were, the buckle of both worlds, in whom the spiritual and material world are clasped and united together; and partaking, as he does, of both extremes, of spirit and of matter, of angel and brute,

there arise within him, from those contrary natures, contrary propensions, viz. rational and sensual, or angelical and brutish; and in the due subordination of these, his sensual to his rational propensions, consists all human virtue.

For his reason, being the noblest principle of his nature, must be supposed to be implanted in him by God, to rule and govern him, to be an eye to his blind and brutish affections, to correct the errors of his imagination, to bound the extravagancies of his appetites, and regulate the whole course of his actions, so as that he may do nothing that is destructive or injurious to this excellent frame and structure of his nature. But now, in this compounded nature of man, there are his concupiscible and irascible affections; with the first of which he desires and pursues his pleasures, and with the second he shuns and avoids his dangers: and there are also bodily appetites, such as hunger, thirst, and carnal concupiscence; and, together with these, a self-esteem and valuation; all which are the natural subjects of his reason, and indeed the only subjects upon which it is to exercise its dominion: so that in the well and ill government of these consists all human virtue and vice. To the perfect well-governing therefore of a man's self, there are five things indispensably necessary.

1. That he should impartially consult his reason, what is absolutely best for him, and by what means it is best attainable; and then constantly pursue what it proposes and directs him to. For, so far as he is wanting in this, he casts off the government of his reason.

2. That he should proportion his concupiscible af-

fections to the just value which his reason sets upon those things which he affects: for every degree of affection which exceeds the merit of things is irrational, and consequently injurious to our rational nature.

3. That he should not suffer his irascible affections to exceed those evils and dangers which he would avoid: for if he doth, they will prove greater evils to him, than those evils or dangers are which raise and provoke them.

4. That he should not indulge his bodily appetite to the hurt and prejudice of his rational nature: for if he does, he will violate the nobler for the sake of the viler part of himself. And,

5. That upon the whole he should maintain a modest opinion of himself; and not think better of his own conduct and management of himself than it deserves: for by so doing, he will be apt to overlook his own misgovernments, and so incapacitate himself for any farther improvements. And in these five particulars consists all that virtue which belongs to a man, considered merely in the capacity of a rational animal:

The first is the virtue of prudence;
The second is the virtue of moderation;
The third is the virtue of fortitude;
The fourth is the virtue of temperance;
The fifth is the virtue of humility.

All which, as I shall shew, are essential parts of the Christian life, and such as do effectually contribute to our heavenly happiness.

I. Prudence. And this is the root and groundwork of all other virtues; it is this that gives law and scope to all our motions, that proposes the ends,

and prescribes the measures of our actions. For prudence consists in being guided and directed by right reason, as it proposes to us the worthiest ends, and directs us to the fittest and most effectual means of obtaining them. So that to live prudently is to live in the constant exercise of our reason, and to be continually pursuing such ends as right reason proposes, by such means as right reason directs us to, which is the proper business of all the virtues of religion. And hence religion, in the scripture, is frequently called by the name of wisdom or prudence; *The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom*, saith Job; *and to depart from evil, that is understanding*, Job xxviii. 28. and, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*, saith David, Psal. cxi. 10. where *the fear of the Lord* comprehends all the acts of religion; which are therefore wise and prudent, because they are the fittest means to those worthiest ends which right reason proposes. So that to exercise our reason in the search and discovery of what is absolutely best for us, and to follow our reason in the pursuit and acquest of what it discovers to be so, is that virtue of prudence whereunto we stand obliged, as we are rational animals.

For our reason being the noblest principle of our nature, that by which we are raised above the level of brutes, yea, by which we are allied to angels, and do border upon God himself, ought, upon that account, to be submitted to, as the supreme regent and directress of all our other powers, and to be looked upon as the rule of our will and the guide of all our animal motions. And when, to gratify our sensual appetites or unreasonable passions, we either neglect those ends which our reason proposes to us, or pur-

sue them by such means as our reason disallows of, we reverse the very order of our natures, and tread antipodes to ourselves; and while we do so, it is impossible we should be happy, either here or hereafter: for every thing, you see, is diseased, while it is in an unnatural state and condition, while its parts are displaced, or put into a disorder, or distorted into an unnatural figure. And so it is with a man, who, while he preserves his faculties in their natural station and subordination to each other, while he keeps his affections and appetites in subjection to his will, and his will to his reason, he is calm and quiet, and enjoys within himself perpetual ease and tranquillity: but when once he breaks this order, and suffers his passions or his appetites to usurp the place of his reason; to impose contrary ends to it, or prescribe contrary means; his faculties, like disjointed members, are in perpetual anguish and anxiety. And hence it is, that in the course of a wicked life we feel such restless contentions between our spirit and flesh, between the *law in our minds* and the *law in our members;* because our nature is out of tune, and its faculties are displaced and disordered, and that sovereign principle of reason, which should sway and govern us, is disposed and made a vassal to our appetites and passions: for in all our evil courses we choose and refuse, resolve and act, not as reason directs us, but as sense and passion biasses us; and our reason having nothing to do in all this brutish scene of action, either sleeps it out, without minding or regarding, or else sits by as an idle spectator of it, and only censures and condemns it. And it is this that causes all that tumult and contest that is in our natures; and till, by the exercise of prudence, our faculties

are reduced, and set in order again, our mind will be like our body, while its bones are out of joint, continually restless and unquiet. And therefore to remove this great indisposition of our nature to happiness, prudence is required of us, as one of the principal virtues of the heavenly part of the Christian life.

For thus our Saviour enjoins, that we should be *wise as serpents*, as well as *harmless as doves*, Matt. x. 16. which though it be here prescribed in a particular case only, viz. that of persecution; yet since the reason of it extends to all other cases, and it is fit we should be prudent in all our undertakings, as well as in suffering persecution, it is upon that account equivalent to an universal command. So also, Ephes. v. 15. *See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise;* i. e. in the whole course of your actions, take heed that ye follow the guidance of your reason, and do not suffer yourselves to be seduced by your blind passions and appetites, which are mere *ignes fatui*, or the guides of fools. And accordingly the apostle prays for his Christian Colossians, *That they might be filled with the knowledge of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*, Col. i. 9; i. e. that they might have such a knowledge of God's will as might render them truly prudent, and cause them to pursue the best ends by the best means. And though this virtue seldom occurs in the New Testament under its own name; yet as in the abovenamed places it is expressed by *wisdom*, so it is elsewhere by *knowledge*, as particularly 2 Cor. vi. 6. where he commands the ministers of the church to approve themselves such by several virtues, and particularly by *pureness*, i. e. continence; and by *knowledge*, i. e. by prudence: for besides that *know-*

ledge, as it signifies an understanding of divine things, was not a virtue in the apostle, but a gift of God, and so not proper to be enumerated amongst these virtues; there is hardly any account can be given why the apostle should place knowledge in the midst of so many moral virtues, if he did not thereby mean the virtue of prudence, which is, as it were, the eye and guide of all the other virtues. So again, 2 Pet. i. 6. where he bids us add to *faith, virtue*, i. e. fortitude, or constancy of mind; and *to virtue, knowledge;* and *to knowledge, temperance:* by *knowledge* it is highly probable he means *prudence*, because he places it in the midst of those two virtues which border nearest upon prudence.

Now that the practice of this virtue is a most proper and effectual means of our everlasting happiness, is evident from hence, because the practice of it is a constant exercise of reason. For to act prudently in religion is to follow the best reason; to aim at heaven, which is the best end, and direct our actions thither by the best rules: it is to consult what is best for ourselves, and how it may be most effectually obtained. In a word, it is to intend the chiefest good above all, and to level our lives and actions most directly towards it: this is religious prudence in the general; and as for those particulars of it which we are obliged to exercise in the several states, relations, and circumstances wherein we are placed, they all consist in doing what is most fit and reasonable, with respect to that great and blessed end.

For by living in the continual practice of religious prudence, we shall by degrees habituate ourselves to a life of reason, and shake off that drowsy charm of sense and passion which hangs upon our minds, and

renders our faculties so dull and unactive: and having disused ourselves a while to obey their blind and imperious dictates, our reason will reassume its throne in us, and direct all our aims and endeavours to what is fittest and most reasonable. For we, being finite and limited beings, cannot operate divers ways with equal vigour at once; and our rational and sensitive propensions are made in such a regular and equilibrious order, that proportionably as the one does increase in activity, the other always decays; and so accordingly as we abate in the strength of our brutish, we shall improve in the vigour of our rational faculties. But to act suitably to their natures being the end of all our faculties and powers of action, the God of nature, to excite them thereto, has founded all their pleasure in the vigorous exercise of them upon suitable objects. Since therefore our reason is the best and noblest of all powers of action, to be sure the greatest pleasure we are capable of must spring out of the exercise of our reason. Wherefore, since prudence consists in the use of our reason, the practice thereof must needs effectually contribute to our pleasure and happiness: for use and exercise will mightily strengthen and improve our reason, and render it not only more apprehensive of what is fit and reasonable, but also more persuasive and prevalent; and when once it is improved into a prevailing principle of action, and hath acquired not only skill enough to prescribe what is right to us, but also power enough to persuade us to comply with its prescriptions; to choose and refuse, to love and hate, to hope and fear, desire and delight, and regulate all our actions by its laws and dictates, then are we entering upon our heaven and happiness.

For that which makes us unhappy is, that our sinful and unreasonable affections do so hamper and entangle us, that we cannot freely exercise our faculties upon such objects as are most suitable to them; that our minds and wills are so fettered by our vicious inclinations, that we cannot exert them upon that which is most worthy to be known and chosen, without a great deal of difficulty and distraction. But now, under the conduct of our reason, our faculties will, by degrees, recover their freedom, and disengage themselves from those vicious encumbrances which do so clog and interrupt them in their rational motions: and when this is throughly effected, we are in full possession of the heavenly state, which (as I have shewed) consists in the free and vigorous exercise of our rational faculties upon the best and worthiest objects. For when once our passions and appetites are perfectly subdued to our reason, all our rational faculties will be free, and every one will move towards its proper object, without any let or hinderance; our understanding will be swallowed up in a fixed contemplation of the sublimest truths; our wills entirely resigned to the choice and embraces of the truest good; our affections unalterably devoted to the love and fruition of the most excellent beauty and perfection; and in this consists the happy state of heaven: so that to live prudently, or, which is the same, to govern ourselves by our best reason, is both a necessary and effectual means of attaining to the heavenly state.

II. Another virtue which appertains to a man, considered merely as a rational animal, is moderation; which consists in proportioning our concupiscible affections to the just worth and value of things,

so as neither to spend our affections too prodigally upon trifles, nor yet be oversparing or niggardly of them to real and substantial goods; but to love, desire, and expect things more or less, according to the estimate which our best and most impartial reason makes of their worth and goodness. For he that affects things more than in the esteem of reason they deserve, affects them irrationally, and regulates his passion by his wild and extravagant imagination, and not by his reason and judgment. And while men do thus neglect their reason, and accustom themselves to desire, and love, and affect without it, they necessarily disable themselves to enjoy a rational happiness. For, besides that their rational faculties, being thus laid by and unemployed, will naturally contract rust, and grow every day more weak and restive; besides that their unexercised reason will melt away in sloth and idleness, and all its vital powers freeze for want of motion, and, like standing water, stagnate and gather mire, and by degrees corrupt and putrefy, till at last it will be impossible to revive them to the vigorous exercise and motion wherein their pleasure and happiness consists: besides this, I say, by habituating ourselves to affect things irrationally, i. e. to love the least goods most, and the greatest least, we shall disable ourselves from enjoying any goods, but only such as cannot make us happy. For he that loves any good more than it is worth, can never be happy in the enjoyment of it; because he thinks there is more in it than he finds, and so is always disappointed in the fruition of it. And the grief of being disappointed of what he expects does commonly countervail the pleasure of what he finds and enjoys. While he is in

the pursuit of any good which he inordinately dotes upon, he is wild and imaginative; he swells with fantastic joys, and juggles himself into expectations that are as large and boundless as his desires: but when once he is seized of it, and finds how vastly the enjoyment falls short of his expectation, his pleasure is presently lost in his disappointment, and so he remains as unsatisfied as ever. And thus, if he were to spend an eternity in such pursuits and enjoyments, his life would be nothing but an everlasting succession of expectations and disappointments. So that all inordinate affection destroys its own satisfaction, and necessarily renders us by so many degrees miserable, as it exceeds the real worth and value of things.

Besides which, also, it is to be considered, that all these lesser goods, which are the objects of our extravagant affections, are things which we must ere long be for ever deprived of: for the lesser goods are those which are only good for the worser part of us, that is, for our body and animal life; the proper goods whereof are the outward, sensitive enjoyments of this world; all which, when we leave this world, we must leave for ever, and go away into eternity, with nothing about us, but only the good or bad dispositions of our souls. So that if our soul be carnalized through our immoderate affection to the things of this world, we shall carry that affection with us, but leave the things which we thus vehemently affect behind us for ever. For that which is the prevailing temper of souls in this life will doubtless be so in the other too; so far is that of the poet true,

——Quæ gratia currûm
Armorumque fuit vivis, quæ cura nitentes
Pascere equos, eadem sequitur tellure repostos.

For though the coming into the other world will questionless improve those souls which are really good before; yet it is not to be imagined how it should create those good who are habitually bad: and if we retain in the other world that prevailing affection to these sensitive goods which we contracted in this, it must necessarily render us unspeakably miserable there. For every lust the soul carries into the other world will, by being eternally separated from its pleasures, convert into an hopeless desire, and upon that account grow more furious and impatient. For of all the torments of the mind, I know none that is comparable to that of an outrageous desire joined with despair of satisfaction; which is just the case of sensual and worldly-minded souls in the other life, where they are full of sharp and unrebated desires, and, like starving men, that are shut up between two dead walls, are tormented with a fierce but hopeless hunger, which, having nothing else to feed on, preys and quarries on themselves; and in this desolate condition they are forced to wander to and fro, tormented with a restless rage, an hungry and unsatisfied desire, craving food, but neither finding nor expecting any; and so in unexpressible anguish they pine away a long eternity. And though they might find content and satisfaction, could they but divert their affections another way, and reconcile them to the heavenly enjoyments; yet being irrecoverably preengaged to sensual goods, they have no savour or relish of any

thing else, but are like feverish tongues that disgust and nauseate the most grateful liquors, by reason of their own overflowing gall: so impossible is it for men to be happy, either here or hereafter, so long as their affections to the lesser goods of this world do so immoderately exceed the worth and value of them.

One essential part therefore of the Christian life, which is the great means of our happiness, is the virtue of moderation; the peculiar office whereof is to bound our concupiscible affections, and proportion them to the intrinsic worth of those outward goods which we affect and desire. For though the word *moderation*, according to our present acceptation of it, be no where to be found in the New Testament, yet the virtue expressed by it is frequently enjoined; as particularly where we are forbid to *set our affections upon the things of the earth*, Col. iii. 2. *to love the world, or the things that are in the world*, 1 John ii. 15. Which phrases are not to be so understood, as if we were not to love the enjoyments of the world at all; for they are the blessings of God, and such as he has proposed to us in his promises, as the rewards and encouragements of our obedience; and to be sure, he would never encourage us to obey him by the hope of such rewards as are unlawful for us to desire and love: the meaning therefore of these prohibitions is, that we should so moderate our affections to the world, as not to permit them to exceed the real worth and value of its enjoyments. For it is not simply our loving it, but our loving it to such a degree as is inconsistent with our love of God, that is here forbidden; for *he that loveth the world* (saith St. John) *the love of the*

Father is not in him; i. e. he that loves it to such a degree as to prefer the riches, honours, and pleasures of it before God, and his duty to him, hath no real love to God, i. e. he loves not God as God, as the chiefest good, and supreme beauty and perfection. And hence covetousness, which is an immoderate desire of the world, is called *idolatry*, Col. iii. 5. because it sets the world in the place of God, and gives it that supreme degree of affection which is only due to him; and this the apostle there calls *inordinate affection*, because it extravagantly exceeds the intrinsic worth and value of its objects. Wherefore we are strictly enjoined *to take heed and beware of covetousness*, Luke xii. 15. and to *let our conversation be without covetousness*, Heb. xiii. 5. By all which, and sundry other commands and prohibitions of the gospel, the moderation of our concupiscible affections is made a necessary part of the Christian life.

Now that this also mightily contributes to our acquisition of the heavenly happiness is evident, not only from what hath been already said, but also from hence, that till our affections are thus moderated, we can have no savour or relish of the heavenly enjoyments. For in this corrupt state of our nature, we generally understand by our affections, which, like coloured glass, represent all objects to us in their own hue and complexion. When therefore a man's affections are immoderately carried out towards worldly things, they will be sure by degrees to corrupt and deprave his judgment, and render him as unfit to judge of divine and spiritual enjoyments, as a ploughman is to be a moderator in the schools. For when a man's thoughts have been em-

ployed another way, and the delights of sense have for a long while preoccupied his understanding, he will judge things to be good or evil, according as they disgust or gratify his lower appetites: and this being the standard by which he measures things, it is impossible he should have any savour of those spiritual goods in which the happiness of heaven consists. For though in his nature there is a tendency to rational pleasures, yet this he may, and very frequently does, stifle and extinguish, by addicting himself wholly to the delights and gratifications of his sense, which by degrees will so melt down his rational inclinations into his sensual, and confound and mingle them with his carnal appetites, that his soul will wholly sympathize with his body, and have all likes and dislikes in common with it; and there is nothing will be capable of pleasing the one, but what does gratify the unbounded liquorishness of the other.

Now to such a soul the spiritual world must needs be a barren wilderness, where no good grows that it can live upon, none but what is nauseous and distasteful to its coarse and vitiated palate; where there are noble entertainments indeed for minds that are contempered to them, that have already tasted and experienced them, but not one drop of water to cool the tip of a sensual tongue, or gratify the thirst of a carnal desire. So that were we admitted to that heavenly place where the blessed dwell, yet unless we had acquired their heavenly disposition and temper, we could never participate with them in their pleasures. For so great would be the antipathy of our sensual affections to them, that we should doubtless fly away from them, and rather choose to be for

ever insensible, than be condemned to an everlasting perception of what is so ungrateful to our natures. So that till we have in some measure moderated our concupiscible affections, and weaned them from their excessive dotages upon sensual good, it is impossible we should enjoy the happiness of heaven: for such perfect opposites are a spiritual heaven and a carnal mind, that unless this be spiritualized, or that be carnalized, it is impossible they should ever meet and agree.

III. Another virtue that belongs to a man, considered merely as a rational animal, is fortitude; which in the largest sense consists in not permitting our irascible affections to exceed those evils or dangers which we seek to repel or avoid; in keeping our fear and anger, our malice, envy, and revenge, in such due subjection, as not to let them exceed those bounds which reason and the nature of things prescribe them: for I do not take fortitude here in the narrow sense of the moralists, as it is a medium between irrational fear and foolhardiness; but as it is the rule by which all those irascible passions in us, which arise from the sense of any evil or danger, ought to be guided and directed; that by which we are to guard and defend ourselves against all those troublesome and disquieting impressions, which outward evils and dangers are apt to make upon our minds. And in this latitude, fortitude comprehends not only courage, as it is opposed to fear, but also gentleness, as it is opposed to fierceness; sufferance, as it is opposed to impatience; contentedness, as it is opposed to envy; and meekness, as it is opposed to malice and revenge: all which are the passions of weak and pusillanimous minds,

that are not able to withstand an evil, nor endure the least touch of it, without being startled and disordered; that are so softened with baseness and cowardice, that they cannot resist the most gentle impressions of injury. For as sick persons are offended with the light of the sun, and the freshness of the air, which are highly pleasant and delightful to such as are well and in health; even so persons of weak and feeble minds are easily offended, their spirits are so tender and effeminate, that they cannot endure the least air of evil should blow upon them; and what would be only a diversion to a courageous soul, troubles and incommodes them. And whatsoever courage such persons may pretend to, it is merely a heat and ferment of their blood and spirits; a courage wherein gamecocks and mastiffs outvie the greatest heroes of them all. But as to that which is truly rational and manly, which consists in a firm composedness of mind in the midst of evil or dangerous accidents, they are the most wretched cowards in nature. For the true fortitude of the mind consists in being hardened against evil upon rational principles; in being so fenced and guarded with reason and consideration, as that no dolorous accident from without is able to invade it, or raise any violent commotions in it: in a word, in having such a constant power over its irascible affections, as not to be over-prone, either to be timorous in danger, or envious in want, or impatient in suffering, or angry at contempt, or malicious and revengeful under injuries and provocations. And till we have in some measure acquired this virtue, we can never be happy either here or hereafter.

For whilst we are in this world, we must expect

to be encompassed with continual crowds of evil accidents, some or other of which will be always pressing upon and justling against us: so that if our minds are sore and uneasy, and over-apt to be affected with the evil, we shall be continually pained and disquieted. For whereas were our minds but calm and easy, all the evil accidents that befall us would be but like a shower of hail upon the tiles of a music-house, which, with all its clatter and noise, disturbs not the harmony that is within; our being too apt to be moved into passion by them uncovers our mind to them, and lays it open to the tempest. And commonly the greatest hurt which these outward evils do us, is, the disturbing our minds into violent passions; and this they will never cease doing, till we have throughly fortified our reason against them: for if our reason commands not our passions, to be sure outward accidents will; and while they do so, we are tenants at will to them for all our peace and happiness; and according as they happen to be good or bad, so must we be sure still to be happy and miserable. And in this condition, like a ship without a pilot, in the midst of a tempestuous sea, we are the sport of every wind and wave, and know not, till the event hath determined it, how the next billow will dispose of us; whether it will dash us against a rock, or drive us into a quiet harbour.

So miserable is our condition here, while we are utterly destitute of this virtue of fortitude: but much more miserable will the want of it necessarily render us hereafter. For all those affections which fall under the inspection and government of fortitude are, in their excesses, naturally vexatious to the mind, and do always disturb and raise tumults in it:

for so wrath and impatience distracts and alienates it from itself, and confounds its thoughts, and shuffles them together into a heap of wild and disorderly fancies; so malice, envy, and revenge do fill it with anxious biting thoughts, that, like young vipers, gnaw the womb that bares them, and fret and gall the wretched mind that forms and gives them entertainment. And though in this world we are not so sensible of the mischief which these black and rancorous passions do us; partly, because our sense of them is abated with the intermixture of our bodily pleasures; and partly, because while we operate as we do, by these unwieldy organs of flesh, our reflections cannot be comparably so quick, nor our passions so violent, nor our perceptions so brisk and exquisite as they will doubtless be, when we are stript into naked spirits: yet if we go away into the other world with these affections unmortified in us, they will not only be far more violent and outrageous than now, and we shall not only have a far quicker sense of them than now; but this our sharp sense of them shall be pure and simple, without any intermixture of pleasure to soften and allay it. And if so, good Lord! what exquisite devils and tormentors will they prove, when an extreme rage and hate, envy and revenge shall be all together, like so many hungry vultures, preying on our hearts; and our mind shall be continually baited and worried with all the furious thoughts which these outrageous passions can suggest to us. When with the meagre eyes of envy we shall look up towards the regions of happiness, and incessantly pine and grieve at the felicities of those that inhabit them; when, through a sense of our own follies, and of the miserable effects

of them, our rage and impatience shall be heightened, and boiled up into a diabolical fury; and when, at the same time, an inveterate malice against all that we converse with, and a fierce desire of revenging ourselves upon those who have contributed to our ruin, shall, like a wolf in our breasts, be continually gnawing and feeding upon our souls, what an insupportable hell shall we be to ourselves! Doubtless, that outward hell to which bad spirits are condemned is very terrible; but I cannot imagine, but that the worst of their hell is within themselves, and that their own devilish passions are severer furies to them than all those devils that are without them. For wrath and envy, malice and revenge, are both the nature and the plague of devils: and though, as angels, they are the creatures of God; yet, as devils, they are the creatures of these their devilish affections: they were these that transformed them from blessed angels into cursed fiends; and could they but once cease to be envious and malicious, they would cease to be devils, and turn blessed angels again. If then these rancorous affections have such a malignant influence as to blacken angels into devils, and make them the most miserable who were once the most happy creatures; how can we ever expect to be happy, so long as we indulge and harbour them?

Wherefore, to remove this great impediment of our happiness, Christianity strictly enjoins us to practise this necessary virtue of fortitude, which consists in the due regulation of all these our irascible affections; in moderating our anger and impatience, suppressing our envy, and extinguishing all our unreasonable hatred and desire of revenge. For hitherto tend all those evangelical precepts, which require

us to *put away all bitterness and wrath, all clamour and evil-speaking, and malice,* Eph. iv. 31. *to lay aside all malice, and to be children in malice,* 1 Pet. ii. 1. 1 Cor. xiv. 20. *to be strengthened with all might unto all patience and longsuffering,* Col. i. 11. And accordingly all the virtues which are comprehended in this of fortitude are reckoned among the fruits of that blessed Spirit, by which we are to be guided and directed; Gal. v. 22. *But the fruit of the Spirit is peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, and meekness:* all which are nothing but this great virtue of fortitude, severally exerting itself upon those several irascible affections that are in us, and guiding and regulating them according to those laws and directions which right reason severally prescribes them; and setting such bounds and limits to each of them, as are necessary to the peace and happiness of our rational natures; that so when outward dangers or evils do excite them, they may not start out into such wild excesses as to become plagues and diseases to our minds.

Now how much the practice of this virtue conduces to our heavenly happiness is evident from hence, that all the diseases and distemperatures which our mind is capable of are nothing else but the excesses of its concupiscible and irascible affections; nothing but its being affected with good and evil beyond those limits and measures which right reason prescribes. Did we but love outward goods according to the value at which true reason rates them, we should neither be vexed with an impatient desire of them while we want, nor disappointed of our expectation while we enjoy them. And when our desires towards these outward goods are reduced

to that coolness and moderation, as neither to be impatient in the pursuit, nor dissatisfied in the enjoyment of them, it is impossible they should give any disturbance to our minds. And so on the other hand, did we but take care to regulate our resentments of outward evils and dangers as right reason advises, they would never be able to hurt or discompose our minds: for right reason advises that we should not so resent them, as to increase and aggravate them; that we should not add the disquietude of an anxious fear to the dangers that threaten us; nor the torment of an outrageous anger to the indignities that are offered us; nor the smart of a peevish impatience to the sufferings that befall us; in a word, that we should not aggravate our want through an invidious pining at another's fulness, nor sharpen the injuries that are offered us by a malicious and revengeful resentment of them. And he that follows the advices of reason, and conducts his irascible affections by them, has a mind that is elevated above the reach of injury; that sits above the clouds in a calm and quiet ether, and with a brave indifferency hears the rolling thunders grumble and burst under its feet. And whilst outward evils fall upon timorous and peevish and malicious spirits, like sparks of fire upon a heap of gunpowder, and do presently blow them up, and put them all in combustion; when they happen to a dispassionate mind, they fall like stones on a bed of down, where they sit easily and quietly, and are received with a calm and soft compliance. When therefore, by the continual practice of moderation and fortitude, we have tamed and civilized our concupiscible and irascible affections, and reduced them under the government of reason, our minds will

be free from all disease and disturbance, and we shall be liable to no other evil but that of bodily sense and passion. So that when we leave our bodies, and go into the world of spirits, we shall presently feel ourselves in perfect health and ease: for the health of a reasonable soul consists in being perfectly reasonable, in having all its affections perfectly subdued to a well-informed mind, and clothed in the livery of its reason. And while it is thus, it cannot be diseased in that spiritual state, wherein it will be wholly separated from all bodily sense and passion; because it has no affection in it that can any way disturb or ruffle its calm and gentle thoughts. And then feeling all within itself to be well, and as it should be, every string tuned into a perfect harmony, every motion and affection corresponding with the most perfect draughts and models of its own reason; it must needs highly approve of, and be perfectly satisfied with itself: and while it surveys its own motions and actions, it must necessarily have a most delicious gust and relish of them, they being all such as its best and purest reason approves of with a full and ungainsaying judgment. And thus the soul, being cured of all irregular affection, and removed from all corporeal passion, will live in perfect health and vigour, and for ever enjoy within itself a heaven of content and peace.

IV. Another virtue which appertains to a man, considered merely as a rational animal, is temperance; which consists in not indulging our bodily appetites to the hurt and prejudice of our rational nature; or, in refraining from all those excesses of bodily pleasure, of eating, drinking, and venery, which do either disorder our reason, or indispose us

to enjoy the pure and spiritual pleasures of the mind. For besides that all excesses of bodily pleasures are naturally prejudicial to our reason, as they indispose those bodily organs by which it operates, (for so drunkenness dilutes the brain, which is the mint of the understanding, and drowns those images it stamps upon it in a flood of unwholesome rheums and moistures; and gluttony clogs the animal spirits, which are, as it were, the wings of the mind, and indisposes them for the highest and noblest flights of reason; so wantonness chases the blood into feverish heats, and by causing it to boil up too fast into the brain, disorders the motions of the spirits there, and so confounds the phantasms, that the mind can have no clear or distinct perception of them; by which means our intellectual faculties are very often interrupted, and forced to sit still for want of proper tools to work with; and so, by often loitering, grow by degrees listless and unactive, and at the last are utterly indisposed to any rational operations:) besides this, I say, (which must needs be a mighty prejudice to our rational nature,) by too much familiarizing ourselves to bodily pleasures, we shall break off all our acquaintance with spiritual ones; and grow, by degrees, such utter strangers to them, that we shall never be able to relish and enjoy them: and our soul will contract such an uxorious fondness of the body, (that being the shop of all the pleasure it was ever acquainted with,) that it will never be able to live happily without it. For though in its separate state it cannot be supposed that the soul will retain the appetites of the body; yet if, while it is in the body, it wholly abandons itself to corporeal pleasures, it may, and doubtless will, retain a vehement hanker-

ing after it, and longing to be reunited to it; which, I conceive, is the only sensuality that a separated soul is capable of. For when such a soul arrives into the spiritual world, her having wholly accustomed herself to bodily pleasures, and never experienced any other, will necessarily render her incapable of enjoying the pleasures of pure and blessed spirits. So that being left utterly destitute of all her dear delights and satisfactions, which are such as she knows she can never enjoy but in conjunction with the body, all her appetite and longing must necessarily be an outrageous desire of being embodied again, that so she may be capable of repeating her old sensual pleasures, and acting over the brutish scene anew.

And this, as some think, is the reason why such gross and sensual souls have appeared so often, after their separation, in the churchyards or charnel houses where their bodies were laid; because they cannot please themselves without them: Ἡ δὲ (ψυχὴ) ἐπιθυμητικῶς τοῦ σώματος ἔχουσα, περὶ ἐκεῖνο πολὺν χρόνον ἐπτοημένη, καὶ περὶ τὸν ὁρατὸν τόπον, πολλὰ ἀντιτείνασα, καὶ πολλὰ παθοῦσα, βίᾳ καὶ μόλις ὑπὸ τοῦ προστεταγμένου δαίμονος οἴχεται ἀγομένη [a]. "The soul that is infected with a "great lust to the body continues so for a great "while after death; and suffering great reluctances, "hovers about this visible place, and is hardly "drawn from thence by force, by the demon that "hath the guard and care of it." Where, by the *visible place*, he means περὶ τὰ μνήματά τε καὶ τοὺς τάφους, περὶ ἃ δὴ καὶ ὤφθη ἄττα ψυχῶν σκιοειδῆ φαντάσματα [b]: that is, "about their monuments and sepulchres, where

[a] Plat. Phæd. p. 398. [b] Ibid. 386.

"the shadowy phantasms of such souls have some-"times appeared." For being utterly unacquainted with the pleasures of spirits, they have nothing in all the spiritual world to feed their hungry desire; which makes them, when they are permitted to wander, to hover about and linger after their bodies; the impossibility of being reunited to them not being able to cure them of their impotent desire of it, but still they would fain be alive again, and reassume their old instruments of pleasure;

———Iterumque ad tarda reverti
Corpora:————
———Quæ lucis miseris tam dira cupido?

And hence, among other reasons, it was, that the primitive Christians did so severely abstain from bodily pleasures, that by this means they might gently wean the soul from the body, and teach it beforehand to live upon the delights of separated spirits; that so, upon its separation, it might drop into eternity, like ripe fruit from the tree, with ease and willingness; and that, by accustoming it before to spiritual pleasures and delights, it might acquire such a savoury sense and relish of them, as to be able, when it came into the spiritual world, to live wholly upon them; and to be so entirely satisfied with them, as not to be endlessly vexed with a tormenting desire of returning to the body again. For so Clemens Alexandrinus, Ἡμῖν δὲ τοῖς θηρωμένοις τὴν βρῶσιν τὴν ἐπουράνιον, ἄρχειν ἀνάγκη τῆς ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν γαστρὸς, ἔτι τε μᾶλλον καὶ τῶν ταύτῃ προσφιλῶν[c]. "We that are hunting after "the heavenly food must take heed that we keep "our earthly belly in subjection, and to keep a strict

[c] Pædag. lib. ii. cap. 1. p. 141.

"government over those things that are pleasant to "it." For, saith he, a little before, Οὔτε γὰρ ἔργον ἡμῖν ἡ τροφὴ, οὔτε σκοπὸς ἡδονή. ὑπὲρ δὲ τῆς ἐνταῦθα διαμονῆς, ἣν ὁ λόγος εἰς ἀφθαρσίαν παιδαγωγεῖ.[d] "Neither," saith he, "is food our work, nor pleasure our aim; but "we use them only as necessaries to our present "abode, in which our reason is instituting and train-"ing us up to a life incorruptible:" i. e. they did so use them, as that, as much as in them lay, they might wean their souls from the pleasures of them, that so they might have the better appetite to that spiritual food upon which they were to live for ever.

And therefore thus to temperate and restrain ourselves in the use of bodily pleasures is one of the necessary virtues of the Christian life: for hitherto tend all those precepts concerning *abstaining from fleshly lusts, which war against our souls,* 1 Pet. ii. 11. and *mortifying the deeds of the body,* Rom. viii. 13. and *keeping under the body,* 1 Cor. ix. 27. and *putting off the body of the sins of the flesh,* Col. ii. 11. And we are strictly enjoined *to be temperate in all things, to watch and be sober, and walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in excess of wine, revellings, and banquetings.* The sense of all which is, that we should not indulge our bodily appetites to the vitiating and depraving of our spiritual; that we should not plunge ourselves so far in the pleasures of the flesh, as to drown our sense and perception of divine and heavenly enjoyments: but that we should so far subdue and mortify our sensuality, as that it may not have the dominion over us, nor be the prevalent delight

[d] Pædag. lib. ii. c. 1. p. 139.

and complacency of our souls; but that the commanding bias and swaying propension within us may be towards divine and heavenly enjoyments; that so, when we leave this body, we may not be so wedded to the pleasures of it, as not to be able to be happy without them; but that we may carry with us into eternity such a quick sense and lively relish of the pleasures above, as to be able to live upon, and be for ever satisfied with them.

So that at first view it is evident how much the practice of this virtue conduces to our future happiness. For by taking us off from all excess of bodily pleasure, it disposes us to enjoy the pleasures of heaven, and connaturalizes our souls to them: so that when, after a long exercise of temperance, we come to leave the body, our soul will be so loosened from it beforehand, and rendered so indifferent to the delights of it, that we shall be able to part both with it and them, without any great regret or reluctancy, and to live from them for ever, without any disquieting longings or hankerings after them. For as, when we are grown up by age and experience to a sense of more manly pleasures, we despise nuts and rattles, which, when we were children, we accounted our happiness, and should have reckoned ourselves undone had we been deprived of them; so when, by the practice of a severe temperance, we have acquired a through sense of the pleasures of virtue and religion, we shall look upon all our bodily pleasures as the little toys and fooleries of our infant state, with which we pleased our childish fancies when we knew no better. And whereas had we been deprived of them then, we should have cried and bemoaned ourselves, as little children do when

they lose their play-games, and reckon ourselves undone and miserable; upon the experience we have had of the nobler and more generous pleasures of religion, we shall be able to despise these little, poor entertainments of our infancy; to take our leave of them without a tear in our eyes, and to live eternally without missing them. For our minds being for the main reconciled to rational and spiritual pleasures, we shall put off all remains of bodily lust with our bodies, and so fly away into the spiritual world with none but pure and spiritual appetites about us; where meeting with an infinite fulness of spiritual joys and pleasures, of which we had many a foretaste in the body, our predisposed mind will presently close with and feed upon them with such an unspeakable content and satisfaction, as will ravish it for ever from the thoughts of all other pleasures. So that now we shall not only be able to subsist without fleshly delights, but to despise and scorn them; our faculties being treated every moment with far nobler fare and better joys.

V. Another of those virtues which belong to a man considered merely as a rational animal, is humility; which consists in a modest and lowly opinion of ourselves, and of our own acquisitions, merits, or endowments; or in not valuing ourselves beyond what is due and just, upon the account of any good we are possessed of, whether it be internal or external. For pride, or an overweaning self-conceit, is the bane of all our virtue and happiness. It causes us to overlook our defects, and thereby hinders us from making farther improvement; and it possesses us with an opinion, that we deserve more than we have, and thereby renders us dissatisfied with our

present enjoyments. For by how much any man overvalues himself, by so much he undervalues what he enjoys; because while he compares what he enjoys with the fond opinion that he hath of himself, he always finds it short of his desert, and so can never be satisfied with it. Yea, such is the cross and capricious humour of a proud spirit, that the more it possesses, the bigger it swells with the opinion of its own desert; and the more it is opinionated of its own desert, the less it is satisfied with that which it possesses and enjoys. For when a man is exceeding apt to flatter and coax himself, he will catch at any pretence to exalt his own merit and desert, and be ready to measure it, not only by what he is, but by what he has too; and then reckoning his outward possessions to be the rewards or products of his inward worth, the more he has, the more he will still imagine he deserves to have. So that his opinion of his own desert will still run on so fast before his enjoyments, that though they should follow it never so close, as the hinder wheels of a chariot do the fore ones, yet it would be impossible for them to overtake it: and so long as he conceives his enjoyments to be behind his desert, he will be always discontented and dissatisfied with them; and while he continues of this humour, the utmost bliss and glory that heaven affords would not be able to satisfy him. For if he were set equal in glory with the highest saint, he would be so puffed and exalted by it in his own conceit, that he would fancy he merited the glory of an angel; and if from thence he were advanced to the throne of an archangel, he would flatter himself into a conceit, that he deserved the glory and dignity of a god: and so long as he

fancied his advancement to be below his merit, he would never be contented with it, how high soever it were; but be continually vexing and repining that he was raised no higher.

And this, I verily believe, was the temper of the Devil, and that which finally ruined and undid him. For when he was an angel of light, he was doubtless placed by the Father of spirits in such an order or degree of dignity as became the perfection of his nature. But he, reflecting on his own endowments, and the glorious condition wherein he was placed, began first to swell with an arrogant and overweaning conceit of himself, and to set too high a value upon his own angelical graces and perfections; and as the natural effect of this, to imagine that he was not high enough advanced in the scale of the heavenly hierarchy; and that his station in the commonwealth of angels was beneath the grandeur and dignity of his nature. This made him look up with envious eyes upon the glorious orders above him, into whose sublime rank he being forbid to aspire by God, the Prince of spirits, he proceeded by degrees to malign and hate both him and them. And this he first expressed by entering into a conspiracy against him with some of his fellow-angels, whom he found most apt to be wrought upon by him; together with whom he made an open revolt, forsook the blessed abodes, as not enduring to abide any longer amongst those blessed orders whom he so inveterately hated and envied: and so, with his revolted legions, descends into this airy region, where ever since he hath persisted in open hostility against God and heaven. And accordingly it is said of him and his accomplices, that they *kept not their first*

station; that is, they would needs have a higher station in heaven than that wherein God had placed them; which because they could not obtain, *they left their own habitation,* i. e. forsook heaven, their native country and abode, and came down into these lower parts of the world, upon design to strengthen the party against heaven, by seducing mankind into the same revolt with themselves, Jude 6.

Thus it was the Devil's pride, you see, that made him envious, his envy that made him spiteful and malicious, all which together made him a Devil. And thus it would be with us, if we could be admitted into heaven whilst we are under the power and prevalence of pride and self-conceit. For while we think better of ourselves than God does, we shall never be contented with his retributions, who will be sure to deal with every man according to his works; and that excessive value we shall have of ourselves will cause us to undervalue the degree and rank of glory and happiness, wherein we shall be placed by the just rewarder of souls, as a station much beneath our imagined excellency and perfection. And hence we shall proceed to think hardly of God, and to repine against him as a partial and unequal distributer of his favours, and to envy and malign those that were placed higher in glory than ourselves; and so at last, out of an implacable vexation and discontent, to leave our habitations as the devils did, and fly away to their revolted party. So impossible is it for a soul that is under a prevailing habit of pride and self-conceit, to be happy either here or hereafter.

And therefore to remove this obstacle, Christianity imposes the practice of humility, as a necessary means

of our happiness; and requires us *to put on humbleness of mind*, Coloss. iii. 12. *to be clothed with humility*, 1 Pet. v. 5. *to walk with all lowliness and meekness*, Eph. iv. 1, 2. *and in lowliness of mind to esteem others better than ourselves*, Phil. ii. 3. In a word, to follow the example of our blessed Lord, who was *meek and lowly*, Matt. xi. 29. and *in honour to prefer one another*, Rom. xii. 10. The sense of all which is, that we should labour, as much as in us lies, to think very meanly and modestly of ourselves, and not to be discontented if others think meanly of us too: i. e. that we should neither be proud nor vainglorious; neither too much exalted in our own opinions, nor endeavour to insinuate into others a higher opinion of us than we do really deserve: in short, that we should so effectually represent to ourselves the little reason we have to be proud of any personal accomplishment, whether it be of body or mind, to strut, like Æsop's crow, in these borrowed feathers, which we could neither give to ourselves nor merit of God, but are wholly owing for to the divine bounty; so to inculcate upon our minds the folly and ridiculousness of being proud of any outward goods we possess; such as fine clothes, great estates, or popular reputation, all which are so far from either making or speaking us wiser or better men, that they are too often the fruits and testimonies of our folly and knavery: and, in fine, that we should so impartially reflect upon the many follies and indiscretions, errors and ignorances, irregularities of temper, defects of manners, and deviations from right reason that we are guilty of, as to shame ourselves out of all those proud and arrogant conceits, that do so swell and imposthumate our minds.

And when, by these and such like humbling reflections, we have laid ourselves low in our own eyes, and so far abased our pride and self-conceit as to be effectually convinced of the folly of it, and throughly persuaded to abhor and hate it, to watch and strive against it, and to be habituated for the main to mean and lowly thoughts of ourselves; though we should not here arrive to an absolute perfection in humility, (having none here to converse or compare ourselves with, but such as ourselves, such as are many of them our inferiors, many our equals, and many but few degrees our superiors,) yet as soon as we go off from this lower form, in which we may seem so considerable, into the class and society of those glorious inhabitants above, (in whose bright presence we shall appear but like so many glow-worms, in the midst of a firmament of stars,) all the little remains of pride and self-conceit in us will immediately vanish from our minds: for if at the sight of an angel the beloved apostle could not forbear prostrating himself; how prostrate and lowly must we be, when we see, not only the whole choir of angels together, but God himself too, the Prince and Father of spirits! For even here we find, that the nearer we approach God, the more we shrink and lessen in our own eyes; and if in the presence of angels we are but dwarfs, in the presence of God we shall be nothings. But, oh! when we shall not only discern how infinitely he outshines us in glory, but shall also continually feel, by the most sensible communications of his goodness, how we hang upon him, and derive every breath, and joy, and glory from him; how our being and well-being are the mere alms and pensions of his bounty; how every grace

and beauty in us is but the reflection, and that a faint one too, of his outstretched rays; when, I say, we shall feel all this, as we shall do in heaven every moment, by a quick and sensible experience, how must it needs wean us from all self-arrogating thoughts, and perfectly abase and humble us in our own eyes! And when this is done, our minds will be perfectly tempered and prepared for the enjoyment of a perfect happiness: for now, such a modest opinion we shall have of ourselves, that whatsoever degree of glory we are placed in, we shall look upon it as far beyond our desert, and, upon that account, be unspeakably satisfied and contented with it, and freely acknowledge it to be a thousand degrees beyond what we could desire or hope for. And so far shall we be from grudging at or envying those above us, that, out of an humble sense of our own unworthiness, we shall readily prefer them before ourselves, and freely acknowledge that we are only so many degrees inferior to them in glory, as they are superior to us in divine graces and perfections. Upon which, we shall not only acquiesce, but heartily rejoice in their advancement, and be abundantly pleased that their reward is as much greater than ours, as we do acknowledge their virtue to be. In a word, so far shall we be from repining and murmuring at God for not rewarding us as liberally as others, that we shall be throughly sensible that he hath been bountiful to us infinitely beyond our desert or expectation; that it was not out of a fond partiality, or blind respect of persons, that he raised others to higher degrees of glory than ourselves, but out of a principle of strict justice that exactly balances and adjusts its rewards according to the de-

grees of our desert and improvement. The sense of which will not only compose our minds into a perfect satisfaction, but also continually excite us to those beatifical acts of love and praise, thanksgiving and adoration. Thus humility, you see, tunes and composes us for heaven, and only casts us down, like balls, that we may rebound the higher in glory and happiness.

Thus you see how all those virtues, which appertain to a man considered as a reasonable animal, conduce to the great Christian end, viz. the happiness of heaven. It is true, indeed, the immediate product of this sort of virtue is only, at least chiefly, privative happiness, or the happiness of rest and indolence, which consists in not being miserable, or, in a perfect cessation from all such acts and motions as are hurtful and injurious to a rational spirit. For, as I have shewed you in the beginning of this section, the proper office of human virtue consists in so regulating all our powers of action, as that we do nothing that is hurtful or injurious to our rational nature; and thus you plainly see these five aforenamed virtues do most effectually perform. But besides this privative, there is, as I shewed you, a positive part of happiness, which consists not in rest, but in motion; in the vigorous exercise of our rational faculties upon such objects as are most suitable to them: and to the obtaining of this part of our happiness, there are other kinds of virtues necessary to be practised by us, of which I shall discourse in the two following sections. But though the immediate effect of these human virtues we have been discoursing of be only the happiness of rest, yet do they tend a great deal farther even to the happiness

of motion and exercise. For it is impossible so to suppress that active principle within us, as to make it totally surcease from motion; and therefore, as every intermission of its sober and regular actings does but make way for wild and extravagant ones; so every abatement of its hurtful and injurious motions makes way for beatifical ones; and so the human virtues, by giving us rest from those motions that are afflictive to our natures, incline and dispose us to such motions and exercise as are most pleasant and grateful to it.

SECT. II.

Concerning those divine virtues which belong to a man considered as a reasonable creature related to God; shewing that these also are comprehended in the heavenly part of the Christian life, and that the practice of them effectually conduces to our future happiness.

I PROCEED now to the second kind of virtues, viz. divine; to which, I told you, we are obliged in the capacity of reasonable creatures related to God, who being not only endowed with all possible perfections, with infinite truth and justice, wisdom and power, with all that can render any being most highly reverenced, admired, loved, and adored; who being not only the Author of our being and well-being, as he is Creator and Preserver of all things, but also our sovereign Lord and King, as he is God Almighty, the supreme and overruling power of heaven and earth, hath upon all these accounts a just and unalienable claim to sundry duties and homages from his creatures: all which I shall reduce to these six particulars:

1. That we should frequently think of and contemplate the beauty and perfection of his nature.

2. That upon the account of these perfections we should humbly worship and adore him.

3. That we should ardently love and take complacency in him.

4. That we should attentively and unweariedly imitate him in all his imitable perfections and actions.

5. That we should entirely resign up ourselves to his conduct and disposal.

6. That we should cheerfully rely and depend upon him. All which, as I shall shew, are included in the heavenly part of the Christian life, and do most effectually contribute to our future happiness.

I. As we are rational creatures related to God, we are obliged to be often contemplating and thinking upon him. For the natural use of our understanding is to contemplate truth; and therefore the more of truth and reality there is in any knowable object, and the farther it is removed from falsehood and nonentity, the more the understanding is concerned to contemplate and think upon it. God therefore being the most true and real object, as he stands removed by the necessity of his existence from all possibility of not being, must needs be the most perfect theme of our understanding, the best and greatest subject on which it can employ its meditations. And besides that, he is the most true and real of all beings: he is also the source and spring of all truth and reality; his power, conducted by his wisdom and goodness, being the cause not only of all that is, but of all that either shall be or can be. And is it fit that our understanding, which was made

to contemplate, should wholly overlook the fountain of it? But besides this too, that he is the greatest truth himself, and the cause of every thing else that is true and real, he is the sovereign of beings, and the most amiable and perfect, as he includes in his infinite essence all possible perfections, both in kind and degree. And what a monstrous irreverence is it, for minds that were framed to the contemplation of truth, to pass by such a great and glorious one without any regard or observance, as if he stood for a cipher in the world, and were not worthy to be thought upon! Nay, and besides all this, (which one would think were enough to oblige our understandings to the strictest attendance to him,) he is a truth, in which, above all others, we are most nearly concerned; as he is not only the father and prop of our beings, and the consolation of our lives, but the sole arbiter of our fate too, upon whom our everlasting well or ill being depends: and what can we be more concerned to think and meditate upon than this great Being, from whom we sprang, in whom we live and breathe, and of whom we are to expect all that evil or good that we can fear or hope for? All which considered, there is no doubt to be made, but that our understanding was chiefly made for God, to look up to him, and contemplate his being and perfections. And though in this imperfect state it is too often averted from him, by this vast variety of sensual things that surround it, and intercept his prospect; yet, as our soul recovers out of this sensual condition into a life of reason, we find by experience that its understanding presently looks upwards, by a natural instinct, and directs itself to God, as to its proper pole and centre. And as it grows more and

more indifferent to the objects of sense, so it becomes more and more vigorous in its tendency towards God and divine things: and it is no wonder it doth so, since it is God only, who is an infinite truth, that is able to satisfy its infinite thirst after truth. And hence it is, that till we have throughly fixed our minds and wills upon God, we do naturally affect such an infinity of objects, that our desires are always reaching at new pleasures, and carried forth after new possessions; that our fancy is always entertaining our mind with new ideas, and our understanding continually calling for new scenes of contemplation; by which, as one hath well observed, the soul declares that it is not to be perfectly pleased with finite truth or good; which possibly may be the reason of that delight we take in fables, and pictures of anticks and monsters, because they exceed the limits of truth, and so do enlarge, as it were, the prospect of the soul, which, by its unconfined motions, shews that it is of a divine extract, and that it can never be perfectly satisfied but in union with God, who is an infinite ocean of truth and goodness. For as for all other beings, they are so very shallow, that we quickly see (or at least shall do, when we see after the manner of spirits) to the very bottom of their truth and reality; and when we have done that, they have no more in them to feed and entertain our understandings. So that when we have exhausted the truth of infinite beings, we must either cease to understand any more, which would be to deprive our noblest faculty of any farther pleasure, or we must at last fix our mind upon God, in whom it will find such infinite truth, as will be sufficient to exercise it throughout all its infinite dura-

tion. But unless we do now acquaint our minds with God, by frequent thinking and meditating upon him, we shall by degrees grow such strangers to him, that by that time we go into the other world, we shall be so far from being pleased with contemplating him, that we shall look upon him as an uncouth object, and out of distaste avert and turn our eyes from him. For the mind of man must be familiarized to its objects, before it will be able to contemplate them with pleasure; and though the objects themselves be never so amiable, yet while the mind is unused to them, its thoughts will start and fly off from them, and, without a great deal of violence, will never be reduced to a fixed and serious attention to them. So that if we go into eternity with minds unaccustomed to the thoughts of God, we shall be continually flying away from him, as bats and owls do from the light of the sun, and never be able to compose our awkward thoughts into a fixed contemplation of his glory. And when we have thus banished ourselves from the only object that can for ever bless and satisfy our understanding, that can keep it in everlasting exercise and motion, and feed its greedy thoughts eternally with fresh and glorious discoveries, we have utterly lost one of the sweetest pleasures that human nature is capable of; and so must necessarily pine and languish under an eternal discontentedness. To prevent which, the gospel enjoins us to train up our minds to divine contemplation, and to be frequently thinking and meditating upon God; to *mind those things that are above*, for so the Greek word is to be rendered, Col. iii. 1. *to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts*, 1 Pet. iii. 15. that is, by entertaining

great and worthy thoughts of him. And therefore the gospel is set before us as a glass, that therein we may *contemplate and behold the glory of God*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. namely, that divine glory which is therein discovered and revealed to us; that we may set him always before our minds, and gather up our thoughts about him, and force them to dwell and stay upon him, that so they may taste and relish his heavenly beauties, and please and satisfy themselves with the view and contemplation of them. For though to meditate closely upon God may at first be irksome and tedious to our unexperienced minds; yet when, by the constant practice of it, we have worn off that strangeness towards God, which renders the thoughts of him so troublesome to us, and by frequent converses are grown better acquainted with him, we shall grow by degrees so pleased and satisfied with the thoughts of him, that we shall not know how to live without them; and our minds at last will be touched with such a lively sense of his attractive beauties, that we shall never be well but while we are with him; so that he will become the constant companion of our thoughts, and the daily theme of our meditations; and nothing in the world will be so grateful and acceptable to us, as to retire now and then from the world, and converse with God in holy contemplations. And though, by reason of our present circumstances and necessities, there is no remedy but our thoughts must be often diverted from him, and forced to attend to our secular occasions; yet, after they have been used a while to God, we shall find they will never be so well pleased, nor so much at ease, as when they are retired from every thing but God, and composed and

settled into divine meditations. So that when we go away into the other world, where we shall be removed from those troublesome circumstances and necessities, which did here so often divert our thoughts from God, our minds, which have been so long accustomed and habituated to him, will immediately fasten upon him, and entirely devote themselves to the contemplation of his nature and glory. For our minds being already strongly inclined and biassed towards God, by those grateful foretastes we have had of him in the warmths of our meditation, when we come into the still and quiet regions of the blessed, where we shall immediately have a more close and intimate view of him than ever, all our thoughts will naturally run towards him, and be so captivated with the first sight of his glory, that we shall never be able to look off again, as long as eternity endures; but one view will invite us to another, and what we see will so transport and ravish us, that we shall still desire to see further and further. And because our finite mind will never be able fully to comprehend all that is knowable in his infinite being, we shall be so delighted in every farther knowledge of him, that we shall still desire to know farther; and that desire, as fast as it springs, shall still be satisfied with a farther knowledge, and so to eternal ages each new satisfaction shall immediately spring a new desire, and each new desire immediately terminate in a new satisfaction. And now, O happy mind! what tongue can express thy joys and raptures! that, being thus in conjunction with God, art always filled with glorious ideas, and compassed round with the wonders of his perfection; so that at every glance thou seest some new charm,

and with every thought makest some vast discovery. O the transporting pleasure of that blessed vision, which now I can hardly think of without an ecstasy; when my poor longing mind, which here gropes about for truth in a dark dungeon of error and ignorance, shall be let forth into the heavenly light, to see as it is seen, and know as it is known! how will it fix its greedy eyes upon God, of whose acquaintance it is now so desirous! With what infinite delight will its winged and active thoughts hover in the light of his countenance, which, through every moment of eternity, will be still revealing new beauties to us, such as will not only for ever employ, but for ever inflame our meditations!

II. As we are rational creatures related to God, we are obliged humbly to worship and adore him; that is, that out of a most awful esteem and profound reverence of his superexcellent majesty and boundless perfections, we should bow down our souls before him, and address ourselves to him by invocation and prayer, by praise and thanksgiving, as to the all-sufficient, independent, and sole disposer of every good and perfect gift; and that in these our addresses we should outwardly express this our reverential esteem of him, by such humble gestures of body, as are most apt to testify it to others: for all this is but a just and due acknowledgment of what he is in himself, and to us, and all his creation. The profoundest reverence and veneration we can pay him is but a just acknowledgment of his infinite majesty and power; the most fervent invocations and prayers we can offer him are but a due owning of him to be what he is, the supreme disposer and author of all things; the most ample and glorious praises

we can give him are incomparably short of what is owing to his infinite excellencies and perfections; the most thankful acknowledgments we can make him are but poor compositions for those vast sums which we owe to his bounty and liberality: so that all our worship is a most just due, arising from what he is in himself, and from what he doeth to us and to all his creatures. And till we are made throughly sensible of both, we are utterly incapable of eternal happiness; which consisting (as I shewed you before) in the vigorous exercise of our rational faculties upon God, doth necessarily require that we should be duly affected with his perfections and actions. For unless we are so, we shall never be able to engage our faculties vigorously to employ and exercise themselves about him; unless our minds be overawed with an habitual sense of his infinite majesty and power, we shall be apt to neglect him as an object too mean for our great faculties to converse with; unless our minds be strongly disposed to esteem and admire his glory and excellencies, we shall never be able to excite our understanding and will to act upon him with any life and vigour: in a word, unless we are possessed with a constant sense that he is the spring of all those goods which we enjoy or hope for, we shall be apt to look upon him as one with whom we are very little concerned, and so to neglect and disregard him. So that, unless we do now acquire an habitual devotion of mind towards God, when we go from hence into the other world, we shall find our faculties so averse and listless to all that heavenly motion and exercise wherein the happiness above consists, that we shall be utterly incapable to taste and enjoy it. For in eternity our

souls will run according to the prevailing bias which they carry thither with them; but it is impossible they should run towards God with life and freedom, unless they are constantly drawn and inclined to him by a devout veneration of his majesty, and admiration of his glory and perfection. And hence it is that the gospel doth so strictly oblige us to *adore and worship God*, Rev. xxii. 9. *to worship him in spirit and in truth*, John iv. 24. *to pray without ceasing*, 1 Thess. v. 17. and *pray always with all prayer and supplication*, that is, earnestly to supplicate God upon every fit opportunity and time of need, Ephes. vi. 18. in a word, *to offer to God the sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name*, Heb. xiii. 15. and *to thank God without ceasing*, 1 Thess. ii. 13. The meaning of all which is, that out of a deep and quick sense of the infinite majesty and power, all-sufficiency and beneficence of God, we should be frequently bowing ourselves before him, and offering up our prayers and praises and thanksgivings to him. And in the constant practice of these, we shall be growing up by degrees to that blissful state of heaven. For all these acts of divine worship being immediate addresses of our minds to God, do so unite us to him, that in every hearty prayer, praise, or thanksgiving, we do in a manner touch and feel him. For so while we humbly adore his majesty, we are sensibly struck with the rays of it; while we earnestly invocate his goodness and mercy, we are touched with a strong attractive virtue from him, whereby we plainly feel ourselves drawn up to him, and wrapt into a real enjoyment of him: in a word, while we are offering our hearty praises and thanks-

givings to him, we are under a captivating sense of his infinite glory and beneficence, and with a sensible touch of this his heavenly fire our hearts are kindled and inflamed; insomuch, that while we are upon our knees in a warmth and fervour of devotion, our minds have many times as quick a perception, as strong and lively a relish of God, as ever our bodily palate had of the most gustful meats or liquors. So that by frequently repeating these our devotions, we frequently repeat these our sensations of God; which being often renewed, will grow more vigorous and constant, and so at last improve into an active, permanent, and habitual sense of him. And having thus acquired, by our frequent and devout worship, a lively, constant feeling and perception of the majesty and glory, of the bounty and benignity of God, whenever we go into eternity, this, like a vital spring, will give a perpetual motion to our faculties, and vigorously exert and employ them upon God for ever. The quick and lively sense we shall have of his infinite majesty and power will for ever awe our understandings and wills into a strict attention and submission to him; and have such a commanding power over us, as will even constrain us to regard him with the profoundest reverence and veneration. For there we shall have far greater and clearer apprehensions of his majesty, than ever we had in this imperfect state; which will improve our pre-acquired sense of it to such a degree of respect and veneration, as will for ever overrule our faculties, and keep our understandings, wills, and affections, in close and strict attendance to him. And as our sense of his majesty will sweetly command, so our sense of his infinite beauty and beneficence will invincibly allure

us to exert and exercise our faculties upon him: for he that hath an affectionate sense of the beauty, and goodness, and bounty of God, hath a heart ready tuned for the music of heaven, ready set and composed for everlasting praises and hallelujahs. So that when he goes away from hence into the other world, and is there admitted to a more intimate view of the perfections, and a more abundant participation of the blessings of God than ever, his predisposed mind will immediately be seized with such a strong pathetic sense of both, as that he will not be able to withhold expressing and venting it in the most rapturous strains of admiration and praise and thanksgiving. And this will be his business and employment for ever, to admire and extol the perfections of God, of which he will every moment make new and glorious discoveries; and to celebrate with grateful acknowledgments the infinite riches of his bounty, of which he will every moment have fresh and sweet experiences. So that whilst by continual acts of praise and thanksgiving we endeavour to affect our minds with a due sense of the goodness and bounty of God, we are practising beforehand the music of heaven, and taking out the songs of Zion; that so when we go from hence, we may be qualified and prepared to bear a part in the celestial choir. So that true devotion, you see, which consists in a quick and lively sense of the infinite majesty, beauty, and benignity of God, doth most effectually dispose the mind to all those divine and heavenly exercises wherein the state of heaven consists.

III. As we are rational creatures related to God, we are obliged to an unfeigned love of and compla-

cency in him: and that both upon the account of what he is in himself, as he is the most lovely and amiable of beings, in whom there is an harmonious concurrence of all imaginable beauties and perfections, of wisdom and goodness, of justice and mercy, and every other amiable thing that can claim or attract a reasonable affection; all which, in infinite degrees, are contempered together in his nature; and also upon the account of his infinite kindness and beneficence to us. For besides that he hath compassed us round, like so many fortunate islands, with a vast ocean of external blessings, in which there is all that is either necessary, convenient, or pleasant for our bodily use and enjoyment; besides that he hath inspired us with immortal minds, and stamped them with those fair impresses of his own divinity, the knowledge of truth and the love of goodness, which are both of them very forward capacities of the highest perfection and most exalted happiness; in a word, besides that, to supply and gratify these our noble capacities, he hath prepared for us an immortal heaven, and furnished it with all the pleasures and delights that a heaven-born mind can desire or enjoy; besides all this, I say, he hath sent his own Son from heaven to reveal to us the way thither, and to encourage us to return into it, by dying for our sins, and thereby obtaining for us a public grant and charter of mercy and pardon, upon condition of our return: yea, and as if all this were too little, he hath sent his Spirit to us, in the room of his Son, to abide amongst us, and as his vicegerent to drive on this vast design of his love to us, to excite and persuade us to return into that sure way to heaven which he hath described to us, and to assist

us all along in our travel thither: so wondrous careful hath he been not to be defeated of this his kind intention to make us everlastingly happy. And now what heart can be so hard and impenetrable as to resist such powerful charms and endearments! Methinks, if we had but the common sense and ingenuity of men in us, it would be impossible for us to reflect upon such miracles of beauty and love, without being intimately touched and affected with them. But till we are so, it will be impossible for us to enjoy heaven. For how can we freely exert our faculties upon an object that we do not love; and if we cannot, how can we, without loving God, enjoy heaven; which consists in the free and cheerful outgoings of all our faculties upon him? For if when we go into eternity we love him not, either he will be indifferent or hateful to us: if the former, we shall altogether neglect and take no notice of him; if the latter, we shall either fly away from him, and banish ourselves from his presence, or be forced to abide and endure it with extreme regret and torment. For whilst our minds are averse and repugnant to him, whatsoever we see in him will but the more enrage and canker our malice against him; and even the sight of those his glorious perfections, which so enravish the hearts of the blessed inhabitants of heaven, will only provoke and boil up our dislike of him to a higher degree of hatred and aversation: for so we find by experience in this life, that while our minds are unreconciled to God, it is a penance to us to come near him, to admit any thoughts of or conversation with him. And this is the reason why we take so much pains as we do to misrepresent him to ourselves, to draw such pictures

and ideas of him upon our minds, as best correspond with our own tempers, that so having thus transformed our notion of him into the image of ourselves, Narcissus like, we may fall in love with him, or at least more easily endure his blessed presence and conversation. When therefore we shall go into the other world, where all these disguises of the divine idea shall be taken off, and *we shall see him as he is*, circled about with his own rays of unstained and immaculate glory, we shall never be able to abide him; but being all affrighted and confounded at the glory of his presence, we shall be forced to run away, and, if possible, to hide ourselves from him in everlasting darkness and despair. For our wills being poisoned and infected with an habitual enmity against him, it must needs be torment to us to see him, because we must always see him happy; which is so great an eyesore to those damned spirits that hate him, that I am apt to think, that, next to being delivered out of their own misery, the chiefest good they desire or wish for, is to be delivered from the tormenting sense of his happiness. For what greater torment can our mind endure, than to be an everlasting spectator of the bliss and happiness of one whom it hates? How then will it fret and gall our meagre and envious spirits, to see that blessed Being, whom we cannot endure, surrounded with an infinite happiness; with a happiness so vast as that it can admit of no increase, and yet so secure as that it can never suffer a diminution? So that it is impossible, you see, for the mind of man to live happily upon God in the other life, unless it be inspired beforehand with an hearty love and affection to him.

And hence it is that our holy religion doth so strictly require us *to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind,* Matt. xxii. 37. *to love him, because he loved us first; to delight ourselves in the Lord,* Psal. xxxvii. 4. *and to rejoice in the Lord,* Phil. iii. 1. *and to rejoice in the Lord alway,* Phil. iv. 4. i. e. to be habitually complacent or well pleased with the infinite beauty, goodness, and perfection of the divine nature. Nay, of such vast import is the love of God in the account of the gospel, that it is there recommended as the proper principle of Christian life: for so, Rom. xiii. 10. we are told, that *love is the fulfilling of the law;* that is, the adequate principle of all Christian obedience: and Gal. v. 6. we are told, that *neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing in Christ Jesus, but faith which worketh by love;* that is, there is nothing of any account with Christ, but such a belief of the gospel as begets in us a hearty love to God, and doth thereby work and exert itself, as by that which is the only genuine principle of Christian life and action. It is true, beside this principle of love, the gospel acts us both by our fear and hope, exciting the one by threatenings of the greatest evils, and animating the other with promises of the greatest goods; but yet it is certain, that neither these nor any other principles of religious action can be acceptable to God, whilst they are totally separated from love to him. For there is no principle of obedience can be acceptable to God, that is not a principle of universal obedience; but to love God being a great and main instance of obedience, that can be no principle of universal obedience which doth not effectually excite us to love him.

It is true, the religion of most men begins upon the principles of hope and fear, and it cannot be denied but these are good beginnings; but yet till by these we are excited to love God, as well as to do the other parts of our duty, our obedience is lame and partial, and consequently unacceptable: so that though hope and fear are good ingredients to compound an acceptable principle of obedience, yet without an intermixture of love, they are by no means sufficient. There may be, indeed, and at first there generally is, much less of love in this internal spring of our obedience, than of hope or fear, whilst yet the whole composition is truly pleasing and acceptable to God. For the lowest degree of cordial love intermixed with our hope and fear, is sufficient to leaven and consecrate them into an acceptable principle of obedience; but still the less of love there is in it, the more weak and languid and imperfect it is; and in all its progresses towards perfection, its ripeness and maturity is to be measured by the degrees of love that are in it: and till our love is arrived to that degree of fervour and ardency, as to become the predominant motive and master ingredient of this our compounded principle of obedience, our state in goodness is very low and imperfect. So that, in short, the principle that acts and moves us in religion is still more and more perfect, the more of love there is in it, and the less of hope and fear: and when hope and fear are both swallowed up in love, and this is become the sole spring of action in us, then it is the principle of heaven, the soul that acts and animates the religion of *just men made perfect.*

So that if ever we design to grow up to their

blessed state, we must endeavour to kindle and blow up the love of God in our hearts. And in order hereunto, we must be frequently representing to our own minds the infinite reasons we have to love him, and pressing ourselves with the vast obligations he hath laid upon us; spreading them fairly before our thoughts in all their endearing circumstances. We must ever and anon set our cold and frozen souls before those melting flames of his love and beauty, and never leave chafing them at them, urging and pressing them with the consideration of them, till we feel the heavenly fire begin to kindle in our bosoms. And above all things we must take care, by the constant practice of what is agreeable to God's nature, to reconcile our minds and tempers to him; for till this is done, we can never be habitually pleased or delighted in him. But when once, by the practice of those eternal rules of goodness that are founded in his blessed nature, we have so far reconciled our natures to him, as that our hearts and his stand bent the same way, and are for the main alike inclined and disposed, then we are prepared for, and made proper and convenient fuel to receive this heavenly flame of love to him; and when this is once so throughly kindled in our hearts, as that we are habitually well-pleased and delighted in him, so as to rejoice in his happiness, acquiesce in his will, and meditate on his beauty and goodness, with an unfeigned complacency of soul, we are then in the same state (that is, in kind, though not in degree) with the blessed people of heaven. And though in this life we may not be able to raise ourselves to that height of love as we desire, and much less as that blessed object deserves, our present knowledge

being short, our thoughts unsteady, and our affections entangled in sense and sensual things; yet when we go from hence into the other world, and are there admitted to a more intimate view of his nature, works, and perfections, our imperfect love will be immediately improved into an high seraphic flame: for now we shall not only know him better, having him always in our view, and continually shining full in our eyes; but we shall be removed from all other objects that are apt to divert our thoughts, and divide our affections from him. So that now our love being kindled and fed with the purest light, with the ever outstreaming rays of the most perfect beauty and goodness, will always exert its utmost vigour, and spend itself without decay in one continued everlasting rapture.

And then how unconceivably happy will our state be, when we shall always live in view of the most lovely object, and always love him as much as we are able, and be able to love him a thousand times more than we can now imagine! For the longer we view, the more we shall know him; and the more we know, the better we shall love him; and so through everlasting ages our love shall be stretching and extending itself upon this infinite beauty and loveliness. Now love is naturally a most sweet and grateful passion, a passion that soothes and ravishes the heart, and puts the spirits into a brisk and generous motion: for it wholly consists in a fixed complacency or well-pleasedness of mind, arising from the apprehended goodness and congruity of the thing beloved; and it is merely by accident that it hath any disquieting or ungrateful emotion mingled with it: either the person beloved is absent,

which fills it with unquiet desire; or he is unhappy or unkind, which mingles it with grief and sorrow; or he is fickle and unconstant, which imbitters it with rage and jealousy: but consider it separately from all these accidents, and it is nothing but pure delight and complacency. But now in heaven our love of God will have none of these disquieting accidents attending it: for there he will never be absent from us, but continually entertaining our amorous minds with the prospect of his infinite beauties; there we shall ever feel his love to us in the most sensible and endearing effects, even in the glory of that crown which he will set upon our heads, and in the ravishing sweetness of those joys he will infuse into our hearts; there we shall experience the continuation of his love in the continued fruition of all that an everlasting heaven means, and be convinced, as well by the perpetuity of his goodness to us, as by the immutability of his nature, that he is an unchangeable lover: in a word, there we shall find him a most happy Being, happy beyond the vastest wishes of our love; so that we shall not only delight in him as he is infinitely lovely and amiable, but rejoice and triumph in him too, as he is infinitely blessed and happy: for love unites the interests as well as the hearts of lovers, and mutually appropriates to each, each other's joys and felicities. So that in that blessed state we shall share in the felicity of God proportionably to the degree of our love to him: for the more we love him, the more we shall still espouse his happy interest; and the more we are interested in his happiness, the happier we must be, and the more we must enjoy of it. Thus love gives us a real possession and enjoyment of

God; it makes us co-partners with him in himself, and derives his happiness upon us, and makes it as really ours as his: so that God's happiness is, as it were, the common bank and treasury of all divine lovers, in which they have every one a share, and of which, proportionably to the degrees of their love to him, they do actually participate to all eternity: and could they but love him as much as he deserves, that is, infinitely, they would be as infinitely blessed and happy as he: for then all his happiness would be theirs; and they would have the same delightful sense and feeling of it all, as if it were all transplanted into their own bosoms. God therefore being an infinitely lovely, infinitely loving, and infinitely happy being, when once we are admitted to dwell for ever in his blessed presence, our love to him can be productive of none but sweet and ravishing emotions; for the immense perfections it will then find in its object must necessarily refine it from all those fears and jealousies, griefs and displeasures, that are mingled with our carnal loves, and render it a pure delight and complacency: so that when once it is grown up to the perfection of the heavenly state, it will be all heaven, it will be an eternal paradise of delights within us, a living spring, whence rivers of pleasures will issue for evermore. O blessed state, in which my heart shall be brimfull of love, and my love shall triumph alone with me, and be all joy and ravishment, being removed for ever out of the noise and neighbourhood of all those disquieting affections which here are wont to mingle with and continually disturb and incommode it!

IV. As we are rational creatures related to God, we are obliged attentively to imitate him in all his

imitable perfections and actions: for this is an allowed maxim, *Perfectissimum in suo genere est mensura reliquorum;* that is, that which is most perfect in its kind, is to be the rule and measure of all those individual natures that are contained under it: for perfection is the measure of imperfection, even as a straight line is of a crooked; and every individual of a kind must needs be so far defective in its nature, as it falls short of that which is most perfect in its kind. God therefore being the most perfect of all in the whole kind of reasonable beings, must needs be the supreme pattern of all those individuals that are under him; and so far as any of them disagree with him, so far they are defective in their natures. Ἀρχέτυπος φύσεως λογικῆς ὁ θεός ἐστι, μίμημα δὲ καὶ ἀπεικόνισμα ἄνθρωπος[e]: i. e. God is the archetype of every reasonable nature, and man is his imitation and image. For he is a being that is infinitely reasonable in all his volitions and actions, that hath not the least intermixture either of humour, or folly, or prejudice in his choices; but is always and in every thing governed by his own pure and all-comprehending wisdom. Upon which account he ought to be owned and looked upon by every reasonable being as the sovereign standard and pattern of their natures; and so far as any reasonable nature moves or acts counter to his, which is the most perfectly reasonable, so far it ought to be looked upon as monstrous and unnatural in its kind: for as it is monstrous in a human body to have its parts displaced, its mouth opened in its belly, or its legs growing out of its shoulders, because these are unnatural positions, that are directly

[e] Phil. lib. ii. p. 132.

contrary to the true idea, form, and figure of a human body; so every reasonable nature that doth not imitate and take after God's, but chooseth and acts contrary to him, is so far monstrous and misshapen, because it is writhed and distorted into a figure that is directly contrary to its natural pattern and exemplar; and while it continues so, it is not capable of true happiness. For that which renders God so infinitely happy in himself is not so much the almighty power he hath to defend himself from foreign hurts and injuries, as the exact agreement of all his motions and actions with the all-comprehending reason of his own mind: for he always sees what is best; and what he sees is best he always chooses and affects; and this makes him perfectly satisfied with himself, and fills him with infinite joy and complacency; because whenever he surveys himself in the glorious mirror of his own mind, he discerns nothing in himself but what is infinitely lovely, nothing but what exactly corresponds with the fairest ideas of his own infinite reason. Whereas if, upon an impossible supposal, it were otherwise, there would arise a civil war within his own bosom, against which omnipotence itself could not protect or defend him: for in despite of himself he would be continually exposed to the just reproaches of his own mind; and his own all-seeing eye would every moment detect and libel and upbraid him, and render him a most inglorious spectacle to himself: so that he would be so far from being infinitely pleased and satisfied with himself, that his own infallible reason would be an everlasting vexation to him.

And so will ours be to us, unless we take care to imitate God in those his divine perfections, from

whence his infinite self-satisfaction arises: for so long as we are conscious to ourselves that we wilfully swerve and deviate from the great exemplar of our rational natures, we cannot but be ashamed of and condemn ourselves, and be highly dissatisfied with our own actions: our conscience must necessarily reproach our will, and our reason upbraid our base inclinations. Now what an intolerable plague is it for a man to be forced to make invectives against himself, and continually to carry his own satires in his bosom! In this life, indeed, what by disguising our faults with specious names, or colouring them over with plausible pretences; what by bribing our consciences with false presumptions, or diverting ourselves from listening to their reproaches by hurrying into vice or business, we may happily make a shift to deal well enough with ourselves. But, alas! what shall we do when we come into the other world, where all fair colour and pretence shall be wiped off, and our vices and we shall appear to ourselves in our own naked and undisguised ugliness; where all our false presumption shall be baffled by a woful experience, and all the din of worldly pleasure and business, in which we were wont to drown the clamours of our conscience, shall be for ever silenced; so that we shall be exposed without fence or guard to the furious reflections of our own mind, and lie stark naked under the lash of an enraged conscience for ever? O good God! what tongue can express the intolerable anguish of such a state, wherein our own deformities shall be continually objected to our eyes, and we shall have nothing to palliate or excuse them, but be always forced to condemn, and hate, and curse ourselves for them,

and yet not be able to correct and reform them; wherein we shall still be hurried on to such actions by our own furious inclinations, as, when we have done them, will startle and amaze us, set on our reason and conscience to worry us with their reproachful reflections, yet, in despite of all their reproaches, we shall still reiterate and repeat them! Like a desperate murderer, who having killed an innocent person, reflects with horror upon his own act, tears his hair, beats his breast, curses and calls himself a thousand villains: but being hereby chafed into a greater fury, instead of reforming, grows more mischievous, and so murders another, and then rages afresh; but still the more he rages the more he murders. And this will necessarily be our state in the other world, if, through our neglect of imitating God, we go away thither under an habitual contrariety of nature to him: besides that we shall be wholly indisposed to those beatifical acts of divine love, worship, and contemplation, in which, as I have shewed, a great part of the pleasure of heaven consists. For since all love is founded in likeness, and likeness is the effect of imitation, how is it possible we should love God, unless we imitate him; and if we do not love him, what pleasure can we take in contemplating and adoring him?

Wherefore in prosecution of its great design, which is to make us happy, the gospel strictly requires us to be alway imitating, so far as they are imitable, the perfections and actions of our heavenly Father; to endeavour to form our natures to his, to rectify the features and lineaments of our souls by his most amiable idea; to be continually framing our tempers by the noble pattern of his mercy and

goodness, his justice, purity, and wisdom; that so being new cast, as it were, in the perfect mould of his nature, we may be transformed into living images of him: so Ephes. v. 1. *Be ye therefore* μιμηταὶ, *imitators*, or *followers of God, as dear children;* i. e. that so you may resemble him in the qualities of your minds, as children do their parents in the lineaments of their bodies. And this is the sense of all those evangelical injunctions, which require us *to be pure, as God is pure; merciful, as he is merciful;* and *perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect;* that is, to take example by God in the whole course of our lives, and trace and follow him in all his imitable perfections, by *putting on that new, that godlike man,* that divine temper and disposition, *which after God,* that is, according to the pattern of his nature, *is created in righteousness and true holiness,* Ephes. iv. 24. This therefore is an essential part of our Christian life, to set God always before our eyes as the great pattern of our lives and actions, and to endeavour constantly to write after him, and transcribe his graces into our natures; that so when we go away into the other world, we may carry with us, at least, a rude and imperfect draught of his blessed image upon our minds, such as when we are removed from the manifold impediments of flesh and blood, and the perpetual diversions of this sensible world, and admitted to a nearer view of God, may be a prevailing bias upon our wills, and incline us to imitate him for ever. For if for the main we are here transformed, by imitating God, into a godlike temper and disposition, all those involuntary contrarieties to him, which, by reason of our ignorance of his

nature, of our bodily temper, and the manifold temptations we are here exposed to, are still remaining in our natures, will be immediately extinguished upon our arrival into the other world; where being freed from all our misconceptions of God, from all the repugnancies of our bodily temper to him, and from all those temptations that were wont to avert us from him, we shall have no involuntary disposition or inclination in us; and then our wills being already predominantly inclined to follow God, and take example by him, and having no contrary inclination to contend with, we shall presently attend to and imitate his perfections with the greatest vigour, freedom, and alacrity of soul: so that now we shall be so intensely fixed to choose and act like God, who is the example and pattern of our natures, that we shall everlastingly regulate all our motions by those very eternal laws of reason, whereby he everlastingly wills and acts; and there is nothing will be so abhorrent to our natures, as an ungodlike will or action. For if, as the apostle tells us, *by beholding now the glory of God in a glass, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory,* 2 Cor. iii. 18. then doubtless much more shall we be so, when we behold him *face to face.* It is true, as our knowledge of God, who is an infinite truth, can never be absolutely perfect, because, if it were, it would be an infinite knowledge; so neither can our resemblance of him be, who is an infinite goodness, because, if it were, we should be infinitely good; both which are contradictions to the state of a creature: yet as we shall be knowing him farther and farther, so proportionably we shall be imitating him too through infinite ages of duration, and still

every act of our imitation shall be so attentive and vigorous, that it shall leave a further impression of his infinite perfection on our natures: so that though our finite nature can never arrive to a perfect likeness of that infinitely lovely and amiable Being, because it can never be infinitely amiable; yet it shall be everlastingly approaching nearer and nearer to him, proportionably as it discovers more and more of his infinite beauty and amabilities, and be still growing more wise and pure, more righteous and benign, according as its prospect of the wisdom, purity, justice, and goodness of his nature is enlarged and extended: so that as his beauty shines into us, it will still imprint itself upon us, and transform us into blessed images of itself; and then, according as we are assimilated to the divine nature, we shall still partake of those joys and pleasures which are inseparable to it, and resemble it in bliss as much as we do in perfection: for as God's infinite perfection is the spring of his infinite self-satisfaction, so from our finite perfection there shall ever redound to us a satisfaction equal to our finite capacities: for though we shall never attain to absolute perfection, that is, to all the possible degrees of wisdom and goodness, which is the peculiar of God; yet to eternity we shall be growing on to it, and in every period of our growth we shall be perfectly what we ought to be, that is, we shall ever know as much of God as is possible for us, our present state and circumstances considered; and so far as we know of him, we shall, to our utmost power, continually imitate and resemble him. And thus in our eternal race to perfection, our wills shall always follow our understanding, and our understandings shall always follow God with

their utmost vigour and activity; so that neither the one nor the other shall ever be deficient of any degree of knowledge and goodness, which *pro hic et nunc* is possible to them.

Now what an unspeakable satisfaction must this give to the mind, when surveying itself round about, it shall find every thing within itself exactly as it ought to be; every faculty to its utmost power and capacity, perfectly corresponding with its original pattern and exemplar; when, upon the strictest scrutiny, it will discover nothing within itself but what the most critical conscience will be forced to approve of; no motion or action but what will endure the test of its severest reason: in a word, when it shall interchangeably turn its eyes from God to itself, and compare grace with grace, and feature with feature, and perceive what an amiable consent and agreement there is between its own copy and his fair original; what a pure imitation of God its life is, and how exactly deiform all its motions and actions are: when, I say, our blessed minds shall always find themselves in this godlike posture and condition, O, what incomparable content and satisfaction will they take in themselves! With what enravishing pleasure will they ever review their own motions, which being immediately copied from the nature of God, will be such as its severest reason will be always forced to commend and approve of! So that now the happy mind will be always triumphing in its own purity, and enjoy within itself an everlasting heaven of content and peace; now it will continually be crowned with the applauses of its own reason, and all its actions will have the joyful echoes of a well-pleased conscience continually re-

sounding after them. And thus by imitating God's perfections, we shall imitate his happiness too, and shall for ever take after him, not only in respect of the rectitude of our natures, but also in the most blessed and comfortable enjoyment of ourselves: besides that, our resemblance of God will everlastingly dispose us to love, and our love to contemplate and adore him: for all these blessed acts do reciprocally further and promote each other; just like contiguous bodies that are placed in a circle, the first of which being moved, thrusts on the second, the second the third, the third the last, if there be no more between; and then the last thrusts on the first, and so round again in the same order. So that if we carry with us into eternity a frame and disposition of nature like God's, we shall always so imitate as still to love him, so love as still to contemplate him, so contemplate as still to adore him, so adore as still to imitate, and love, and contemplate him anew; and in this blessed circle we shall move round for ever, with unspeakable vigour and alacrity.

V. As we are reasonable creatures related to God, we are bound to resign up, and submit ourselves to his blessed will and disposal: for God hath a just dominion over all, founded in his own infinite power, that doth not, like other dominions, result to him from any external acts or achievements, but is the eternal prerogative of his own nature. For he, as well as all other beings, hath a freedom to exercise his own abilities, so far as it is just and lawful; but being infinitely paramount to all other powers whatsoever, he can be subject to no superior authority, nor consequently be obliged by any other law, but

that of his own nature: so that whatsoever he can do, he can justly do, if it be not contrary to the infinite perfections of his nature: for his power being infinite and unconfined, as well as his wisdom, justice, and goodness, doth sufficiently warrant him to do whatsoever is consistent with them; otherwise he would be infinitely powerful in vain: and therefore since he can exercise a dominion over all, he must needs have an eternal right to do it, so far as his own wisdom, goodness, and justice will permit, which are the only laws by which he can be bounded in the exercise of his infinite power and ability: so that while he governs us by such rules and laws as are convenient to his own nature, his own greatness and power, which exalts him above all other law or authority, sufficiently warrants him so to do. And being thus rightfully enthroned by the infinite preeminence of his own power and majesty, all other beings, so far as they are capable, stand immutably obliged to submit and resign themselves up to his government.

But besides that we are obliged to him as he is God, we are also bound to him as he is our Creator: for there is always a power acquired by benefits, where there is none antecedently; especially where the benefit conferred is no less than that of our being, which is the case between us and God. And this is such a benefit as is sufficient to entitle him to us, by an absolute and unalienable propriety, though he had no antecedent right of dominion over us, by virtue of his own infinite greatness: so that though before he created us, or any other being, he had free power to act any thing that lay within the compass of just and lawful, which just and lawful was not de-

finable by any other law but that of his own nature; and though, since his creation, his power is no more, (so that he hath not acquired to himself any new power by creating us, but only made new subjects whereon to exercise that ancient power and dominion, which was eternally inherent in him,) yet doubtless, by giving us our beings, he hath laid new obligations upon us to obey him: for now deriving ourselves, as we do, from him, we are bound by all the ties of equity and justice to render back ourselves to him, and to submit those powers to his dominion, which are the effects and offspring of his bounty. For what can be more just and equal, than that that will which is the cause of our beings should be the law and rule of our actions; than that we should serve him with those powers we derived from him, and render him back the fruits of his own plantation? For now we are not our own, but God's, and he alone hath power to dispose of us; and whensoever we dispose of ourselves contrary to his will and pleasure, we do not only invade his property, but employ the spoils of it against him. And whilst we continue thus doing, is it possible we should ever be happy? For besides that, while we continue in rebellion against him, we are in an actual confederacy with hell; for so when we are told, that *rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft*, that is, rebellion against God, the meaning is, that, like witches, we are in league with the Devil, and are listed volunteers under those infernal powers, who, for blowing the trumpet of rebellion in heaven, were banished thence six thousand years ago, and have ever since been raising forces in this lower world against God; so that whilst we continue with them

in defiance to God, we are in the Devil's muster-roll, who is captain-general of all the revolted legions, and so are of the quite opposite party to the loyal people of heaven, and consequently can never hope, while we continue such, to be admitted to their society and happiness; besides all this, I say, rebellion against God doth naturally draw a hell of miseries after it: for it cannot be supposed that the wise Sovereign of the world should be so unconcerned for his own authority, as to suffer his creatures to spurn at and affront it, without ever manifesting his displeasure against them in some dire and sensible effects. And therefore though in this life, which is the time of our trial and probation, he mercifully forbears to lead us to repentance; yet if we leave this life with our wills unsubdued and unresigned to him, we must not expect to be thus gently dealt with in the other. For it is as easy for him who is the father of our spirits to correct our spirits, as it is for the parents of our flesh to correct our flesh. And though our souls are no more impressible with material stripes, than sunbeams are with the blows of a hammer; yet are they liable to have horrid and dismal thoughts impressed upon them, and to be as much aggrieved by them, as sensible bodies are with the most exquisite torments. So that if God be displeased with us, there is no doubt but he can imprint his wrath upon our minds, in black and ghastly thoughts, and cause it perpetually to drop like burning sulphur on our souls. And it being in his power thus to lash our spirits; to be sure, when once he is implacably incensed against us, (as he will be in the other world, if we go rebels thither,) he will more or less let loose his power upon us, and make us feel

his wrathful resentments, by infusing supernatural horrors into our souls, and scourging our guilty and defenceless spirits with inspirations of dire and frightful thoughts. Now though this be not a natural and necessary effect of our rebellion against God, because it depends upon his will, who is a free agent; yet considering that he is a wise agent, and that as such it is necessary he should one way or other manifest his displeasure against such as are unreclaimable rebels to his authority, it is next to a natural one; and at least the fearful expectation of it in such rebellious spirits (which is a misery next to the enduring it) is necessary and unavoidable. For God hath imprinted a dread of his own power and majesty so deeply on our natures, that we are not able, with all our arts of self-deceit, wholly to obliterate and deface it: and though in this life we may sometimes suppress and stupify our sense of God; yet even here, in spite of ourselves, it will ever and anon return upon us. And if when we have done what we know is offensive to that invisible majesty we stand in awe of, we do not suffer ourselves seriously to reflect upon it, there presently arises in our minds a swarm of horrid thoughts and dismal expectations; and if in this present state in which we have so many salvos for our wounded spirits, so many pleasures and self-delusions to charm our natural dread of God, our overcharged consciences do notwithstanding so often recoil upon us, and alarm us with such dismal abodings; what will they do hereafter, when all those pleasures are removed, and all those self-delusions baffled, with which we were wont to soothe and divert them? Then doubtless we shall be continually stung with

sharp and dire reflections, and our consciences, like tragic scenes, be all hung round with the ensigns of horror; then shall the dread of God perpetually haunt us like a grim fury, and the terror of his offended majesty strike us into an everlasting trembling and agony. For so St. James tells us, that *the devils themselves do believe and tremble*, James ii. 19. they believe that there is an almighty Being above them, and are conscious that they are in actual rebellion against him, which makes them horribly afraid of his vengeance; and yet such is the inveterate devilishness of their natures, that they will by no means hearken to a submission, but, in despite of their own dread and horror, do still persist in an open defiance to their almighty enemy, and so tremble and sin, and sin and tremble for ever. And so shall we, if we go into the other world habitual rebels to God; our deep and inveterate malice against him will still hurry us on to incense and provoke him, and then our natural dread of his power and majesty will break into frightful and horrible thoughts, and so be continually revenging upon us those our continual provocations of him: for then our soul will be nakedly exposed to the lash of its own furious thoughts, and have no shield to defend itself against the terrors of its guilty conscience, which being roused up and kept awake by the unintermitting sense of our misery, will be always clamouring upon us, and continually torturing us with black and horrid reflections. So that whilst we are wandering among wretched ghosts, through those dismal shades below, we shall be perpetually meditating horrors, and never leave lashing ourselves with our own sharp and terrible thoughts, till we have chafed

ourselves into furies, and boiled up our self-condemning rage into an everlasting madness. Thus as our sense of our unlikeness to God will ever fill us with shame and confusion, so will the sense of our rebellion against him continually strike us into fear and amazement.

To prevent which, our holy religion, which doth so industriously consult our happiness, requires us now to *submit ourselves to God*, James iv. 7. *to live to God*, Gal. ii. 19. *to present ourselves living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God*, Rom. xii. 1. *to yield ourselves unto God, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God*, Rom. vi. 13. The sense of all which is, that we should endeavour so to affect our minds with the sense of God's authority over us, and with the manifold reasons of our obedience to him, as to be firmly and constantly resolved within ourselves, neither to choose any thing that he forbids, nor to refuse any thing that he commands; that we should set him up a throne in our hearts, a fixed and prevailing resolution of obedience, that therein he may sit and reign, and have the absolute empire and command of all our inward motions and outward actions; in a word, that we should acquire such an habitual respect to and reverence of his sovereign authority, that no temptation from within or without us may be able to countermand it, or to seduce us from our duty into any wilful course of rebellion against him. And when once we have framed our minds into this obediential temper, we are in a forward preparation for heaven. And though by reason of those remains and relics of corrupt nature that are in us, which are here continually excited by the many tempta-

tions among which we live, we may find reluctant and counterstriving principles within us; a stubborn appetite contending against an obedient will, and sometimes upon surprise or inadvertence overpowering it; yet if we heartily bewail this as our unhappiness, and if when we thus fall, we weep and rise again, and take more care of our steps for the future, we shall carry with us, when we go from hence into the other world, a will that is habitually resigned to God; and so being there removed from all the temptations that were wont to excite in us those contrary appetites and inclinations, we shall immediately become all duty and obedience, and freely give up ourselves to God, without the least shadow of contest or reluctancy. And in this blessed state we shall continue for ever, so entirely devoted to God, that between him and us there shall ever be one common will, and end, and interest; and our hearts, which before were in a great measure set and tuned to the heart of God, will be instantly such perfect unisons with it, that whensoever or whatsoever he speaks, we shall still resound and echo to him, from our inmost bowels, with unspeakable cheerfulness and alacrity.

And being thus reduced to a perfect submission to the will of God, we shall therein find ourselves incomparably happy: for now our wills being always determined by the will of God, we shall be perfectly eased of all the trouble and distraction of choosing. Now our minds will no longer hover in suspense, nor be divided between contrary reasons; but all its thoughts will glide gently on in a calm and even current, without ever being tossed and bandied to and fro by cross and opposite deliberations: for now

it no sooner knows the will of God, but it rests in it immediately with a free assent and uncontrolled approbation; so that upon new occasions it is free from the trouble of forming new choices and resolutions, being already fixed, under all events, to one steady course of motion, and immoveably resolved, whatever befalls, ever to do what God would have it. And its will thus perfectly acquiescing in God, as in its proper place and element, it will no longer dispute as it was wont to do, no longer waver between two loadstones, but always obey upon the first motion, and follow him for ever without deliberation. In which happy state we shall be no longer ground between those countermoving millstones, *the law in our minds* and *the law in our members;* but being entirely resigned to God, we shall ever obey him *secundo flamine,* with a full current of inclination and nature. And what a mighty ease must this be to the soul; especially considering that by being thus entirely subject to God, it will not only be released from the trouble of choosing and deliberating, but also throughly warranted of the goodness and rectitude of its own choices? For so far as we are subject unto God, our wills are his, and so are our actions too; and whilst they are so, we can have no reason to mistrust, either that they are bad in themselves, or that he is angry and displeased at them. For his will, we know, is governed by his nature, which is the standard of good and evil, the law and measure of right or wrong; so that while we will and act as he would have us, we have a sufficient warrant for what we do; a warrant that will for ever bear us out, and justify us to our own minds, and always render us abundantly satisfied with our-

selves; so that we shall not only always acquit, but always reverence ourselves; and our conscience will not only cease to shame us, but be continually applauding and smiling upon us, and instead of those importunate clamours with which it was wont to entertain us, its constant echo to all our actions will be, *Well done, good and profitable servant.* So that being entirely determined by the will of God, which never varies from the law of his nature, we shall be perfectly satisfied with ourselves, and for ever choose and act without the least mistrust or hesitance. And then our wills being perfectly subject to his, and all our powers of action entirely at his devotion, we shall never have the least ground to fear or suspect his displeasure, but be always fully satisfied that he loves us, that we are dear and precious in his eyes, and that to eternity he will respect and look upon us with the smiles of an unchangeable complacency. The sense of which will ravish our hearts, and for ever fill us *with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* So that whereas rebellious souls are perpetually haunted with two restless furies, viz. the shame of their guilt and the fear of their danger, which even here do give them more disturbance, than all their sins can pleasure and delights; when once we are perfectly subjected to God, we shall be for ever discharged of them both; and then will our happy minds be always as courageous as truth, and as confident as innocence itself.

And as by our perfect submission to God we shall be wholly released from the trouble of choosing, and sufficiently warranted in our own choices, so we shall be abundantly satisfied both of the wisdom and success of them; for then we shall be assured, even

by a sweet and happy experience, that whatsoever God commands us to do, he most certainly knows that it is for our good, and that that is the reason why he commands it. So that when we are entirely subjected to God, our choices and actions will be all directed by an infallible wisdom to our own good. For while we choose what God would have us, our wills are guided by God's wisdom; and so in every genuine act of obedience we are as infallible as omniscience itself. When therefore we are perfectly resigned to God, we shall always will and act with as much confidence and assurance of a happy and prosperous success, as if we ourselves were infinitely wise, and had a perfect comprehension of all possible issues and events. And whilst wretched rebels grope about under the conduct of their own blind wills, and for the most part do they know not what, and go they know not where themselves, but live by chance, and act at random; our wills and actions being wholly steered by an all-wise will, that never fails to measure them by the best rules, and point them to the best ends, we shall be always sure of our hands, and know infallibly beforehand, that every thing we will or do shall conspire to our own good. And this will enable us to perform the everlasting race of our obedience with an unspeakable freedom and alacrity, and always render us wondrous light and nimble, and expedite in our operations. For whereas when men know not what may happen upon such an action, and are not able to pry out all those hidden events that lurk in the womb of their own designs, they always act with caution and anxiety, and are doubtful and tremulous in their motions; when once we are sure of a good event,

we still go on with courage and cheerfulness: and so we shall ever do, when we ever perfectly will and act under the command of God. For now we shall always see good issues before us, and be firmly assured from that infallible wisdom which governs his will, and by his ours, that every thing we will or do shall be crowned with a happy effect. And this will for ever wing our souls with an unwearied vigour and activity, and render each act of our obedience unspeakably sweet and delightful to us. And now, O blessed mind! what tongue or thought can reach thy happiness; who, living in a most perfect subjection to an all-good and all-wise will, art never in the least concerned or troubled to debate and deliberate what to choose, but dost everlastingly embrace and follow what an infinite goodness and an infinite wisdom hath chosen for thee!

VI. As we are reasonable creatures related to God, we are also obliged cheerfully to trust in and depend upon him: for as he is the prop and centre of all the mouldering creation, the almighty Atlas that bears it upon his shoulders and keeps it from sinking into ruin, we and every creature in heaven and earth do hang upon him, and draw our breath from him, and if he shake us off but for a moment, we presently drop into nothing, and perish: for could we exist of ourselves this present moment, we might as well have done so the moment before, and may as well do so the moment after, and so backwards and forward to all eternity; and unless we had such a fulness of essence in us, as to exist of ourselves from all eternity past to all eternity to come, it is impossible we should exist so much as one moment without new supplies from the infinite and independent

Fountain of being. And what can be more fit or reasonable, than that we who are thus borne up by him should freely trust in and depend upon him? than that we should build our hope upon the prop of our existence, and make him the stay of our confidence *in whom we live, and move, and have our being?* Especially considering what a proper object of trust and dependence he is; and that not only as he is the sovereign disposer of all those issues and events which concern us, but also as he is infinitely wise, and always understands what is good or hurtful to us, and as he stands engaged both by his own essential goodness and free promise never to fail those that put their trust in him; but to manage all their affairs to their everlasting interest and advantage. And in whom can we more rationally confide, than in a Being of infinite wisdom, goodness, and power? that always knows what is best for us, that always wills what he knows so, and always does what he wills? All which considered, it is certainly incomparably more to our interest and advantage that our concerns should lie in his hands, and be managed as he sees best, than that every thing should happen to us according to our own will and desire: for there are innumerable things which in the natural series and order of causes are concomitant and consequent to every event, the greatest part of which are out of the sphere of our cognizance; by reason of which it is impossible for us to make an infallible judgment of the good or evil of any event that befalls us; because though we may be secure that such an event singly and apart by itself may be good or evil for us; yet for all we know, there may be such concomitants or consequents inseparable to

it, as may quite alter its nature, and render that evil which considered singly may be good for us, or that good which considered singly may be evil. We earnestly wish for such an event, and are very confident it would be mighty advantageous to us. But, alas! if it should befall us, according to the series of things a thousand others must, and what they will prove we are not able to prognosticate; but for all we know, the mischief of them may abundantly outweigh the benefit of this. And this being so, how extremely unfit are we to make choices for ourselves; since in most particulars it is almost an equal lay, whether what we choose will prove our food or our poison! But now God being the supreme orderer and disposer of things, and having the first link of every chain of causes in his own hands, must needs have an entire comprehension of all the intermediate ones, from the beginning to the end; and his power being not only the cause of all actual events, but also of the possibility of those that shall never be actual, he must needs discern the utmost issues and concomitants of every possible, as well as of every future event, and perfectly understand, not only what will be beneficial or injurious to us, but also what might be so. So that it is impossible for him to be mistaken in his choices, because he knows as well beforehand what things would be to us if they were, as what they are when they do actually exist. Upon the whole therefore, it is doubtless of inestimable advantage to us to be in the hands of God; and verily, next to hell itself, I know nothing that is more formidable, than for God to let us alone, and give us up to our own wills and desires. And should he call to us from heaven, and tell us that he was

resolved to cross our desires no more, but to comply with all our wishes, let the event prove good or bad, we should have just reason to look upon ourselves as the most forlorn and abandoned creatures on this side hell, as persons excluded from the greatest blessing that belongs to a creature; and if we had any hope of his re-acceptance of us, it would be infinitely our interest to resign back ourselves and all our concerns to him, and on our bended knees to beseech him, above all things, not to leave us to ourselves, or throw us from his care and conduct. It being therefore upon all accounts so highly fit and reasonable, and so much to our interest and advantage, that we should freely trust ourselves, and all our affairs, into the hands of God, and depend upon him for the good success of all our honest endeavours and undertakings; that we should acquiesce in his disposal of things, and under all outward events be pleased and satisfied with his conduct, as knowing that howsoever things may happen to us, they cannot be otherwise than as the wise and good God is pleased either to permit or to order and determine them; this, I say, being so fit in itself, and so much for our interest, it is impossible that without it we can be happy either here or hereafter. For since both our being and well-being are wholly dependent on the will of God, and we can neither be, nor be happy one moment longer than he pleases, how is it possible we should ever be quiet and satisfied in our own minds, without a great assurance of and confidence in him? When we consider what a mighty stake we have in his hands, how all our fortunes lie at his feet, and how easily he can frown us into nothing, or spurn us into a condition ten thousand

times worse than nothing, whenever he pleases, how can we be otherwise secure in our own minds, or avoid being externally anxious and solicitous, but by firmly relying on his truth and goodness; to the want of which is to be attributed all that carking care, tormenting fear, and disquieting thoughtfulness, which perpetually haunts the minds of men. They are sensible that their condition is dependent, and that it is not in their own power either to make it what they would have it, or to secure and continue it when it is made so: they know that by a thousand chances, which in despite of their foresight or power may happen, the next moment either themselves may be snatched from what they possess, or what they possess may be snatched from them: they find that their most probable designs are liable to innumerable miscarriages; and that when they have formed their projects never so wisely, there are infinite cross accidents may intercur and dash them in pieces: and in this uncertain state of their affairs they either think not of God at all, but live at the courtesy of a fickle chance, and leave themselves to be tossed and bandied to and fro at the pleasure of a blind and undesigning fortune, upon whose ever-moving wheel their wearied thoughts can never rest; or if they think of God, it is with great mistrust and despondency; they fear he will not be regardful enough of them, nor prove so kind to them as they could wish; and are possessed with an obstinate opinion, that it would be much better for them to be their own carvers, than to live at his disposal and allowance. And hence proceed all those anxieties and discontents, those fretting cares, dismaying fears, perplexing and misgiving thoughts, which do

continually gall and disquiet them; and from these their thorny disquietudes it is impossible they should ever be wholly free, no, not in heaven itself, till they have wrought their minds to a perfect trust and confidence in God. For we shall be altogether as dependent upon God for our heavenly, as we are for our earthly happiness; because, though all those acts of heavenly virtue, in which our heavenly happiness consists, will be much more in our own power than any of these worldly goods are; yet they will be no longer in our power than God shall think fit to enable us to choose and act, and to support us in our being and existence, which then we shall sensibly perceive entirely depends upon the all-enlivening vigour of his vital breath. And therefore though he hath promised to continue our being in that most blessed state for ever, yet unless we perfectly trust in his veracity, our minds will be continually disturbed with anxious and misgiving thoughts; we shall be afraid lest one time or other he should forget his promise, and upon some unknown reason or emergency withdraw from us that influence of his all-upholding power, upon which our being and well-being depends, and let us drop into nothing. And the greater our happiness is, the more we should be afraid of losing it; because we should be always sensible that it entirely depends upon the pleasure of God, whose truth and goodness we cannot perfectly confide in. So that were we placed in the midst of heaven with a misgiving, distrustful mind of God, that would imbitter all the joys of it, and give them a harsh and ungrateful farewell. For the fearful apprehensions we should continually have of being thrust out of heaven again, and tumbled head-

long from all our glory, would be such a continual affliction to us, that we should even pine away our happy eternity, for fear of being eternally deprived of it. So impossible it is for any dependent being to be happy, without an entire trust and confidence in God, upon whom its being and happiness depends.

And therefore the gospel, to render our future happiness complete, endeavours to train us up beforehand to a firm and perfect confidence in God, by making it an essential part of our duty to *commit the keeping of our souls to God in well doing*, 1 Pet. iv. 19. *to trust in the living God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy*, 1 Tim. vi. 17. *not to trust in ourselves, but in God, who raiseth the dead*, 2 Cor. i. 9. *to believe in God*, and not to be troubled at any events which happen to us in this world, John xiv. 1. and *not to cast away our confidence*, Heb. x. 35. and the like. The sense of all which is, to press and engage us to a constant and cheerful reliance upon God, and to endeavour to affect our minds with a deep sense of his overruling providence, and a full assurance of the goodness of all those great designs he is driving on in the world; and accordingly to acquiesce in and embrace all events as the tokens of his love and favour, and always to live upon this persuasion, that it is infinitely better for us to be in God's hands than in our own; and that he knows much better how to dispose of us and our affairs than we do; and that he will take care to dispose of them as much to our advantage as we ourselves should, if we knew as much as he doth. Now though by reason of those strong impressions which sensible things in this life

of sense make upon us, we should not always be able so firmly to rely upon and repose ourselves in God's invisible power, as not to be at all disquieted about the issues and events of things; yet if by frequent acts of trust and reliance on him, we have so disposed our minds to confide in him, as that by looking up to his overruling providence we can ordinarily stay and support ourselves amidst the changes and revolutions of this world; if when a storm of adversity hangs lowering over, or showers down upon us, we can fly to God for shelter, and promise ourselves safety and protection under the outstretched wings of his providence; in a word, if when we smart we can ordinarily hope in him, and rest persuaded, that under his gracious conduct and disposal all things shall work together for our good; this our imperfect wavering hope and dependence shall in the other life be immediately ripened into a most perfect confidence and assurance: for there we shall be wholly removed from this life of sense, by which our trust in God's invisible providence is very much weakened and distracted; and besides we shall have much quicker apprehensions of his nature, and of the infinite reasons we have to confide in him. And then, when after all the threats of a tempestuous voyage we shall find ourselves landed in a blessed world, and possessed of all its promised glories, this mighty experiment of God's fidelity and goodness will immediately settle our predisposed minds into such an immoveable confidence in him, as that from thenceforth no fear or distrust will ever find the least access to our thoughts, but we shall be so perfectly assured of his truth and goodness, that though we shall feel ourselves sustained and blessed

every moment by the arbitrary influences of his benignity and power, yet we shall be as confident for ever of the continuance of our bliss, as we could be if we did self-exist, and held the eternity of our being and happiness as independently as God doth his. For though our condition will be ever dependent, yet it will be ever dependent upon such a foundation as can no more fail than God's own life and being; viz. upon his veracity and goodness, both which are so essential to him, as that he cannot exist without them. And knowing ourselves so firmly secured in this our dependent state, as that we can never sink, unless God himself sink under us, we shall be to all eternity not only as safe, but as satisfied in it, as if we were every one a god to himself, and in this blessed security we shall quietly enjoy God and ourselves for ever. So that our trust and confidence in God will crown the pleasure of all our other virtues, by giving us full security of an everlasting fruition of it. For now the ravished mind will have no fear or distrust to cramp or arrest it in its blessed operations; no anxious thoughts of a sad futurity to sour its present enjoyments; but it will enjoy all heaven every moment, in a fearless security of enjoying it all for ever: and when it shall perfectly love, contemplate, and adore God, with a sure and certain confidence of contemplating, loving, and adoring him perfectly for ever, O! how unspeakably will this enhance the pleasure of those beatifical acts! For now in every moment of all our blessed eternity, we shall still have the joy of a blessed eternity to come; and besides all those pleasures which each present moment of our heavenly life shall abound with, we shall still have the pleasure of a prospect of

infinite ages of pleasure. And thus the blessed mind, you see, by its perfect dependence upon God, consummates its own heaven, and secures itself for ever in a most quiet and undisturbed enjoyment of it.

By all which I think it sufficiently appears, how much each of these divine virtues, which as rational creatures we are obliged to exert and exercise upon God, contributes to our heavenly happiness; and consequently, how indispensably necessary our present practice of them is to dispose and capacitate us to enjoy it.

SECT. III.

Concerning the social virtues, shewing that these also are included in the heavenly part of the Christian life, and that in their natures they very much contribute to our heavenly happiness.

MAN, of all sublunary creatures, is the most adapted for society: for though the greatest part of other creatures do covet society as well as he, yet he alone is furnished with that gift of nature which renders society most pleasant and useful, and that is the gift of speech: by means of which we can express our thoughts, and maintain a mutual intelligence of minds with one another; and thereby divert our sorrows, mingle our mirth, impart our secrets, communicate our counsels, and make mutual compacts and agreements to supply and assist each other: and in these things consists the greatest use and pleasure of society. And as of all creatures we are the best fitted for society, so we stand in the greatest need of it: for as for other creatures, after they come into the world, they are much sooner able to help themselves than we; and after we are most able to help ourselves, there are a world of ne-

cessaries and conveniencies, without which we cannot be happy, and with which we cannot be supplied without each other's aid and assistance; which in an unsociable state of life we should, of all creatures in the world, be the most indisposed to render to one another. For as Aristotle hath observed, Ὥσπερ γὰρ τελειωθὲν βέλτιστον τῶν ζώων ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν, οὕτω καὶ χωρισθὲν νόμου καὶ δίκης χείριστον πάντων[e]. As man in his perfect state is the best of all animals, so separated from law and right he is the worst. For out of society we see his nature presently degenerates, and instead of being inclined to assist, grows always most salvage and barbarous to his own kind. Since therefore we have so much need of each other's help, society is absolutely necessary to cherish and preserve in us our natural benevolence towards one another, without which, instead of being mutually helpful, we should be mutually mischievous. For as the same philosopher hath observed, Ὁ δὲ μὴ δυνάμενος κοινωνεῖν, ἢ μηδὲν δεόμενος δι' αὐτάρκειαν, οὐδὲν μέρος πόλεως, ὥστε ἢ θηρίον ἢ θεός[f]. He that cannot contract society with others, or through his own self-sufficiency doth not need it, belongs not to any commonwealth, but is either a wild beast or a god. We being therefore so framed for society, and under such necessities of entering into it, it hence necessarily follows, that being associated together, we are all obliged in our several ranks and stations so to behave ourselves towards one another as is most for the common good of all; and that since the happiness of each particular member of our society redounds from the welfare of the whole, and is in-

[e] De Repub. lib. i. p. 298. [f] Id. ibid.

volved in it, we ought to esteem nothing good for ourselves that is a nuisance to the public: because whatsoever this suffers, I and every man suffer; and unless I could be happy alone, that can never be for my interest in particular, that is against my interest in common. Now in such a mutual behaviour, as most conduces to our common benefit and happiness, as we are in society with one another, consists all social virtue; the proper use and design of which is to preserve our society with one another, and to render it a common blessing to us all. And hereunto five things are necessary, viz.

1. That we be charitably disposed toward one another.

2. That we be just and righteous in all our intercourses with each other.

3. That we behave ourselves peaceably in our respective states and relations.

4. That we be very modest towards those that are superior to us in our society, whether it be in desert or dignity.

5. That we be very treatable and condescending to all that are inferior to us. Under these particulars are comprehended all those social virtues upon which the welfare and happiness of human society depends. Now that the practice of all these is included in the Christian life, and doth effectually conduce to our everlasting happiness, I shall endeavour particularly to prove. And,

I. As rational creatures associated and so related to one another, we are obliged to be kindly and charitably disposed towards each other. For the end of our society being mutually to aid and assist one another, it is necessary, in order hereunto, that we

should every one be kind and benevolent to every one, that so we may be continually inclined mutually to aid and do good offices to one another. And so far as we fall short of this, we fall short of the end of our society: for to be sure the less we love one another, the less prone we shall be to promote and further each other's welfare, and consequently the less advantage we shall reap from our mutual society. But if instead of loving we malign and hate each other, our society will be so far from contributing to our happiness, that it will be only a means of rendering us more miserable: for it will only furnish us with fairer opportunities of doing mischief to one another, and that mutual intercourse we shall have, by being united together in society, will supply us with greater means and occasions to wreak our spite upon each other. For society puts us within each other's reach, and by that means (if we are enemies) renders us more dangerous to one another; like two adverse armies, which when they are at a distance can do but little hurt, but when they are joined and mingled, never want opportunities to destroy and butcher one another. So that hatred and malice, you see, renders our society a plague, and we were much better live apart poorly and solitarily, and withdraw from one another as beasts of prey do into their separate dens, than continue in one another's reach, and be always liable, as we must be while we are in society, to be baited and worried by one another.

And as hatred and malice spoils all our society in this life, and renders it worse than the most dismal solitude, so it will also in the other. For whensoever the souls of men do leave their bodies, they

doubtless flock to the birds of their own feather, and consort themselves with such separate spirits as are of their own genius and temper. For besides that good and bad spirits are, by the eternal laws of the other world, distributed into two separate nations, and there live apart from one another, having no other communication or intercourse but what is between two hostile countries that are continually designing and attempting one against another; so that when wicked souls do leave this terrestrial abode and pass into eternity, they are presently incorporated by the laws of that invisible state into the nation of wicked spirits, and confined for ever to their most wretched society and converse; besides this, I say, likeness doth naturally congregate beings, and incline them to associate with those of their own kind. Now rancour and malice is the proper character of the Devil, and the natural genius of hell; and consequently it is by a malicious temper of mind that we are naturalized beforehand subjects of the kingdom of darkness, and qualified for the conversation of furies. So that when we go from hence into eternity, this our malignant genius will render us utterly averse to the friendly society of heaven, and naturally press and incline us to consort with that wretched nation of spiteful and rancorous spirits, with whom we are already joined by a likeness and communion of natures. But O! much better were it for us to be shut up all alone for ever in some dark hole of the world, where we might converse only with our own melancholy thoughts, and never hear of any other being but ourselves, than to be continually plagued with such vexatious company. For though we who are spectators only of cor-

poreal action cannot discern the manner how one spirit acts upon another; yet there is no doubt but spiritual agents can strike as immediately upon spirits, as bodily agents can upon bodies; and supposing that these can mutually act upon one another, there is no more doubt but they can mutually make each other feel each other's pleasures and displeasures, and that according as they are more or less powerful, they can more or less aggrieve and afflict one another: and if so, what can be expected from a company of spiteful and malicious spirits joined in society together, but that their conversation should be a continual intercourse of mutual mischiefs and vexations, especially considering how they here laid the foundation of an eternal quarrel against one another? For there all those companions in sin will meet, who by their ill counsels, wicked insinuations, and bad examples, did mutually contribute to each other's ruin; and being met in such a woful state, how will the tormenting sense of those irreparable injuries they have done each other whet their fury against, and incite them to play the devils with one another! And what can be expected from such a company of waspish beings, so implacably incensed against one another, but that being shut up together in the infernal den, they should be perpetually hissing at and stinging each other? But then besides those mutual plagues which these furious spirits must be supposed to inflict upon one another, they will be also nakedly exposed to the powerful malice of the devils, those fierce executioners of God's righteous vengeance, who, as we now find by experience, have power to suggest black and horrid thoughts to us, and to torture our souls with such

dreadful imaginations, as are far more sharp and exquisite than any bodily torments. And if now they have such power over us, when God thinks fit to let them loose, what will they have hereafter, when our wretched spirits shall be wholly abandoned to their mercy, and they shall have free scope to exercise their fury upon us, and glut their hungry malice with our griefs and vexations? It seems at least a mighty probable notion, that that horrid agony of our Saviour in the garden, which caused him to shriek and groan, *and sweat as it were great drops of blood*, was chiefly the effect of those preternatural terrors, which the devils, with whom he was then contesting, impressed upon his innocent mind: and if they had so much power over his pure and mighty soul, that was so strongly guarded with the most perfect and unspotted virtues, what will they have over ours, when we are abandoned to them, and thrown as preys into their mouths! With what an hellish rage will they fly upon our guilty and timorous souls, in which there is so much tinder for their injected sparks of horror to take fire on!

Since therefore rancour and malice doth so naturally incline and hurry our souls towards the wretched society of devils and damned spirits, the gospel, which so industriously consults our happiness, takes all possible care to train us up in charity and mutual love; and makes it a principal, as well as necessary part of our Christian life, heartily *to love one another*. For this, as our Saviour tells us, is the darling precept which lay next to his heart, *This is my commandment, That ye love one another*, John xv. 12. And accordingly we are bid, not only *to follow after charity*, 1 Cor. xiv. 1. and *to do all things*

with charity, 1 Cor. xvi. 14. but also *to put on charity, above all things*, Col. iii. 14. and to *dwell in love*, which, the apostle tells us, is to *dwell in God, who is love*, 1 John iv. 16. The intent of all which is, to oblige us to bear an universal good-will to all, and to take an hearty complacency in all that are truly lovely; to be ready to contribute to and rejoice in every one's good and welfare; and, in a word, to live in the continual exercise of all those charitable offices, which our present state and condition requires and calls for: to be courteous and affable, and to treat all those we converse with with an obliging look, a gentle deportment, and endearing language: to be longsuffering, mild, and *easy to be intreated;* not to break forth into rage and storm upon every petty provocation; and when we are justly provoked, not to suffer our displeasure to fester into malice and rancour, but to be forward and easy to be reconciled: to be of a compassionate and sympathizing temper, and *to rejoice with those that rejoice*, and *weep with those that weep:* to be candid interpreters of men and their actions; to be ready to mitigate and excuse their faults, and put fair comments on their actions; and to be so far from making malicious glosses on their innocent meaning, from proclaiming their miscarriages, and rejoicing in their falls, as not to believe ill of them but upon undeniable evidence; and when we are forced to do so, to pity and lament them, and endeavour, and pray, and hope for their reformation. In short, to be benign and bountiful to the necessitous and distressed, and to endeavour according to our ability to allay their sorrows, remove their oppressions, support them under their calamities, and coun-

sel them in their doubts; to be ready to every good work, and, like fields of spices, to be scattering our perfumes through all the neighbourhood; and all this out of an honest and sincere purpose to promote their good, and not merely to acquire to ourselves a popular vogue and reputation: all which are essential parts of that charity which the gospel enjoins us to exercise towards one another. For so the apostle assures us, 1 Cor. xiii. 4—7. *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

Now though there be several acts of charity that will cease for ever in heaven, such as longsuffering, giving of alms, and forgiving of injuries, and the like, because among the people of heaven there will be none of the faults or miseries about which these acts are conversant; yet even the practice of these is indispensably necessary to temper and dispose our minds to heavenly charity, which till we are disposed to by universal love, we shall never be capable of exercising; but since all virtuous dispositions are acquired by acts, it is impossible we should acquire the disposition of universal love, unless we universally practise it. It is by giving alms that we must acquire cordial charity to the poor and needy; and by forgiving injuries that we must dispose ourselves to love those that offend us: for these acts are causes as well as signs of a charitable temper, and are necessary, not only to signify it where it is;

but also to produce it where it is not. When therefore, by acting all those parts of charity which are proper to this as well as the other state, we have acquired this blessed disposition of universal charity, our minds are fairly framed and tempered for the society of heaven. And though in the perpetual justle and tumult of this world some little piques and displeasures should now and then arise in our minds, yet if in the cool and standing temper of our souls we are hearty wellwishers to all men, and hearty lovers of all that do in any measure love and resemble God, we are in a natural tendency to heaven, that perfect element of love; and when we go from hence shall consort ourselves with unspeakable joy and alacrity with those great and blessed lovers that inhabit it; who being all of them most amiable and godlike souls, that are every one of the same temper with ourselves, being touched at the same loadstone, and made partakers of the same divine nature, we shall immediately close and join with them in the strictest unions of love. For those heavenly people being all of them most flagrant lovers of God, are so united in him who is the common centre of love, that no saint or angel can enjoy his love without possessing a proportionate degree of theirs: and their love of one another being all subordinate to their common love to God, and grounded upon it, though their strongest inclination, like that of excited needles, be still towards him the blessed magnet at which they have every one been touched, yet do they all stick fast to one another, being clung inseparably together by those attractive virtues which they have all derived from him: and in this state of perfect friendship they converse together

with unspeakable pleasure, and all their conversation is a perpetual intercourse of wise and holy endearments. And now what a blessed society must this be, wherein perfect love and friendship reigns, and hath an all-commanding empire; where every heart mingles with every one; and all like precious dusts of gold are melted together into one solid ingot; where infinite myriads of blessed spirits, by interchangeably clasping and twining with one another, are so inseparably united and grown together, that they are all but one compounded soul; and when, from the highest angel to the lowest saint, they are all so tied together by the heart-strings, that every one is every one's dear friend, what inexpressible content and complacency must they needs take in one another! When I shall pass all heaven over, through ten thousand millions of blessed beings, and meet none but such as I most dearly love and am as dearly beloved by, O what unspeakable rejoicing and congratulations will there be between us! especially when I shall find no defect either of goodness or happiness in them, nor they in me, to damp our mutual joy and delight in each other; but every one shall be what every one wishes him, a perfect and a blessed friend: for perfect lovers have all their joys and griefs in common between them; but the heavenly lovers having no griefs among them, do only communicate their joys to one another: for where they love so perfectly as they do in heaven, there can be no such thing as a private or particular happiness, but every one must have a share in every one's; and consequently in this their mutual communication of blisses, every one's happiness will, by his friendship to every one,

be multiplied into as many happinesses as there are saints and angels in heaven; and so every joy of every member of the church triumphant runs round the whole body in an eternal circulation. For that blessed body being all composed of consenting hearts, that like perfect unisons are tuned up to the same key, when any one is touched, every one echoes and resounds the same note; and whilst they thus mutually strike upon each other, and all are affected with every one's joys, it is impossible but that in a state where there is nothing but joy, there should be a continual consort of ravishing harmony among them. For such is their dear concern for one another, that every one's joy not only pays to, but receives tribute from every one's; so that when any one blessed spirit rejoices, his joy goes round the whole society; and then all their rejoicings in his joy reflow upon and swell and multiply it; and so as they mutually borrow one another's joys, they always pay them back with interest; and by thus reciprocating, do everlastingly increase them.

II. As we are rational creatures related to one another, we are obliged to be just and righteous in all our intercourses with each other: to yield to every one whatsoever by any kind of right, whether natural or acquired, he can demand or challenge of us. For there are some things to which every man hath a right by nature, as he is a part or member of human society. As for instance, life, which is the principle of all our actions and perceptions, is freely lent us by God, who is the source and fountain of life; and consequently till God resumes his loan, or we forfeit it by our own actions, we have all a natural right to live; and for any man to attempt to deprive

us of our life, or of our means of living, is the highest injury and injustice. Again, words being instituted for no other end but to signify our meaning, and to be the instrument of our intercourse and society with one another, every one who is a member of human society hath a right to have our meaning truly signified to him by our words; and whosoever lies or equivocates to another, doth injuriously deprive him of the natural right of society. Again, a good name being the ground of trust and credit, and credit the main sinew of society, till men have forfeited their good name, they have a natural right to be well-reputed and spoken of; and whosoever either by false witness, public slander, or private whisperings, endeavours to attaint an innocent man's reputation, doth thereby injuriously attempt to exclude him from the conversation of men, and shut the door of human society against him. Once more, promises being the great security of our mutual intercourse and society with one another, every man that hath a right to society hath a right to what another promiseth him, provided it be but lawful and possible; and therefore for any man to promise what he intends not to perform, or to go back from his promise when he lawfully may or can perform it, is an act of unjust rapine: and I may every whit as honestly rob another man of what is his without my promise, as of what I have made his by it; he having an equal right to both by the fundamental laws of society. In fine, the great design of our society being to help and assist one another, every man has a right to be aided and assisted by every one with whom he hath any dealing or intercourse; to have some share of the benefit of all that exchange, traf-

fic, and commerce, which passes between him and others; and therefore for any man in his dealings with others to take advantage from their necessity or ignorance to oppress or overreach them, or to deal so hardly by them, as either not to allow them any share of the profit which accrues from their dealings, or not a sufficient share for them to subsist and live by, is an injurious invasion of that natural right which the very end and design of society gives them. But then, besides these natural, there are also acquired rights; and such are those which either by legal constitution, or by mutual compacts and agreements, we are seized and vested with; which constitutions and compacts being absolutely necessary to the upholding and regulating of human societies, it is no less necessary that all those rights which they confer should be inviolably preserved; and whosoever knowingly or wilfully takes away or detains from another what he is thus entitled to by law or agreement, is guilty either of a fraud or a robbery, either of which is an unjust violation of the rights of human society. So that the practice of justice and righteousness, as it is confined to human society, consists in not intrenching either upon the natural or acquired rights of those with whom we have any dealing or intercourse; in not endeavouring to deprive them either of their lives or livelihoods, unless by their own actions they forfeit them to us; in imparting our true meaning to them by our words, and neither hiding it under lies and falsehoods, nor disguising it with equivocal reservations; in making good to them all our lawful and possible promises; in not falsely aspersing their good names and reputations, nor suffering them to be falsely

aspersed when we are able to vindicate them; in neither using them cruelly in our dealings, so as wilfully to damnify them, nor hardly, so as either to take all the advantage to ourselves, or not to allow them such a competent share of it, as is necessary to support and maintain them: in a word, not to defraud or rob them of any thing, which either by constitution of law, or by compact and agreement, they have a right to: this is civil righteousness, and without this it is impossible that any society should be happy. For how can any one be secure in a society, where violence and rapine, falsehood and oppression reign; where causes are decided, not by rules of justice, but by dint of power, and the strongest arm is the sole arbitrator of right and wrong; where promises and professions are only traps and snares; and every man lays ambushes in his words, and lurks behind them in reserved meanings, only to await an opportunity to surprise and ruin every one he converses with? It would doubtless be far more eligible for men to disperse and disband their society, and live apart as vermin do, and subsist by robbing and filching from one another, than live together, as they must in such a state of injustice, like bundles of briers and thorns, and out of their mutual jealousies and distrusts be continually tearing and scratching one another.

Now, as I shewed you before, what men's tempers are here, such will their company be hereafter: so that if we go out of this world with an unrighteous temper, we must expect to be confined in the other to an unrighteous society; and if unrighteousness be such a nuisance to our society in this life, what a plague will it be to it in the life to come! For the

most barbarous societies of men in this life have some remains of justice and equity among them; and though the best of them have many corrupt members that are bad in the main, yet whether it be by their natural temper or their fear of punishment or disgrace, or by their sense of honour or checks of conscience, they are frequently restrained from many bad things, and particularly from dishonesty and injustice; by which means their society is rendered much more tolerable. But in the other life, as they are all perfectly good that are in the society of the good, so they are all perfectly wicked that are in the society of the wicked; and whatsoever checks there may be in their natures to any particular acts of wickedness, they are there all borne down by their inveterate malice against God, and outrageous despair of ever being reconciled to him. So that in all their society with one another, there is not the least intermixture of just and righteous intercourse, but all their conversation is falsehood and treachery, violence and oppression, and whatsoever else is hurtful and injurious to one another. For the Devil, who is the sovereign prince of their society, is described in scripture to be the *father of lies*, and a *murderer from the beginning;* that is, a most outrageously unjust and unrighteous being, one whose whole trade hath been to cheat and deceive, to rook men of their happiness, and mask his murderous intentions against them with dissembled smiles and fawning endearments: and doubtless *Regis ad exemplum* is true there as well as here; the miserable vassals of his dark kingdom do all imitate his manners and tread in his footsteps; and if so, O good Lord, what woful society

must they have with one another, when by reason of their continual experience of each other's falsehood and insincerity all mutual trust and confidence is banished from among them, and every one is forced to stand upon his own guard in continual expectance of mischief from every one: when all their life is a trade of diabolical knaveries, and their whole study is to do and retaliate injuries; and the main business of this their hellish society is to circumvent and play the devils with one another. Doubtless this alone is enough to make hell a most dreadful state, though there were nothing else dreadful in it; and I verily believe, if it were left to my own option, I should much rather choose to languish out an eternity in some dismal dungeon alone, and there converse only with my own silent griefs, than to dwell for ever in the garden of the world, accompanied with such false and villainous creatures.

That this therefore may not be our fate hereafter, it is a great part of the business of our holy religion to train us up for better company, by inuring us beforehand to the practice of righteousness and justice: for so it obliges us *to do unto men whatsoever we would that men should do unto us,* Mark vii. 12. that is, so to deal with every man as if we had exchanged persons with him, and he were in our place, and we in his. And in particular it enjoins, us to be *harmless as doves, as well as wise as serpents,* Matt. x. 16. *to converse in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity,* 2 Cor. i. 12. *to keep up an honest conversation in the world,* 1 Pet. ii. 12. *not to lie to one another,* Coloss. iii. 9. *not to go beyond or defraud our brother in any matter,* 1 Thess. iv. 6. The sense of all which is, to oblige us to

maintain a strict integrity in all our professions and intercourses with men, and not to allow ourselves in any course of action, which the laws of justice and sincerity disapprove; to measure our words by our meaning, and our meaning, so far as we are able, by the truth and reality of things; to converse among men with a generous openness and freedom, and with as little reserve and disguise as is possible and prudent, considering what a treacherous and ill-natured world we have to deal with; to be what we seem, and not to paint ill meanings with smiling looks and smooth pretences; to notify our intentions and unfold our hearts, and, so far as innocent prudence will admit, to turn ourselves inside outwards to all we converse with; to give to every one his due, and not to intrench upon other men's rights, whether it be to their lives or liberties, reputations or estates: in a word, to weigh our neighbours and ourselves in the same balance, and to do to them whatsoever we could reasonably wish they should do to us, if we were in their persons and circumstances. By the practice of which excellent rules our mind will by degrees be refined and purified from all disposition to fraud and injustice; and then when we go from hence into eternity, we shall carry thither with us such a just and righteous frame of mind, such an honest plainness and integrity of temper, as will immediately qualify and dispose us for the society of *just men made perfect*, who finding us already united to them in disposition and nature, will joyfully receive us into their blessed communion. And now, O the blessed state we shall be in, when being stripped of all partiality and unjust desire, of all insincerity and craftiness of temper, we shall be

admitted into a nation of just and righteous people, where every one has his appropriate seat and mansion of glory, and is so perfectly contented with it, that he never covets what another enjoys, so that every one possesses what is his own, without the least suspicion of being ejected by a subtler or more powerful neighbour; where, being perfectly assured of each other's integrity, they converse together with the greatest openness and freedom; and in all their language, whatsoever it be, do read their hearts and convey their intentions to one another; where their souls converse face to face, and do freely unbosom themselves to one another, without the least disguise or dissimulation; so that in all their society there is no such thing as a secret or mystery, but they are all bosom-friends to one another, and every one has a window into every one's breast! O blessed God, what a most happy conversation must such just souls as these enjoy with one another, from whose society all fraud and falsehood, violence and oppression is for ever banished! For whilst they live together, as they do, in the continual exercise of perfect righteousness and integrity, they can neither design upon nor suspect one another, and so consequently must needs converse together with infinite security and freedom: and being all of them thus inviolably safe in each other's sincerity and justice, every one enjoys his proper rank and degree of glory without fear or disturbance, and freely communicates his wise and excellent thoughts to every one without any strangeness or reserve. Thus all heaven over there is a most perfect freedom of conversation among those righteous people that inhabit it, and every one is every one's neighbour, and every one's

neighbour is as himself: for in all their communication and intercourse they mutually exchange persons with one another, and there is no one doth that to another, which he would not gladly have done to himself in the same condition and circumstances. So that none of them all can possibly be aggrieved because they are every one dealt by just as they would be, most fairly, most righteously and faithfully. And hence there can be no grudges among them, no whisperings, backbitings, or spiteful misrepresentations, because every one likes what every one does, and so they are all perfectly satisfied with one another. And thus you see in the exercise of perfect righteousness and integrity all the society of heaven is rendered perfectly happy.

III. As we are rational creatures related to one another, we are obliged to behave ourselves peaceably in our respective states and relations. For society being nothing but an united multitude, it is indispensably necessary to the preservation of its union, that every individual member of it should peaceably comport himself towards every one in that degree and order wherein he is placed. Because, as the health of natural bodies depends upon the harmony and agreement of their parts, so doth the prosperity of societies or political ones. For it is peace and mutual accord which is the soul that doth both animate and unite society, and keep the parts of it from dispersing and flying abroad into atoms, which nothing but force and violence can hinder them from, when once they are broken into discords and dissensions. So true is that of our Saviour, *A kingdom divided against itself cannot*

stand. For besides that division impairs the strength of a society, which like an impetuous stream being parted into several currents runs with far less force, and is much more easily forded; for the several factions that are in it are like the several nations in a confederate army, which, though they be all united into one body, have several contrary interests and designs, which divides their councils, and sows jealousies among them, and so renders them not only less able to withstand the force of an unanimous enemy, but also less willing to aid and assist one another: besides this, I say, faction and discord naturally disunites and separates society, as it dissolves the bond of peace which holds it together. For a society without peace is but an aggregated body, whose parts lie together in a confused heap, but have no joints or sinews to fasten them to one another; for want of which, instead of mutually assisting, they do but mutually load and oppress each other; which must necessarily divide their wills and their interests; and when that is done, it is only external force that hinders them from dividing and separating their persons. Upon this account, therefore, every man is obliged, as he is a member of human society, to comport himself peaceably with all men; because otherwise he will necessarily render himself a public pest and nuisance. For so long as he is of an unquiet and turbulent spirit, instead of being an help he must necessarily be a disease to every community of which he is a member; and if those with whom he is joined were all of his humour and spirit, it would be much better for them all to live asunder in the most solitary condition,

than to continue in society together; because instead of helping and assisting, they would be sure to be continually vexing and plagueing one another.

If therefore we go into the other world with an unquiet and quarrelsome temper, we shall be thereby inclined to and prepared for the most wretched and miserable society, even the society of those factious fiends that could not be quiet even in heaven itself, but raised a mutiny before the throne of God, and for so doing were driven thence, and damned to keep one another company in endless misery and despair. The souls of men therefore being by the law of the invisible state always assigned to that society of spirits whereunto they are most connaturalized in their temper, we must expect, if we go into eternity with turbulent and contentious minds, to be thrust into the society of devils and damned ghosts, with whom we are already joined in a strict communion of natures. And O what a dreadful thing must it be, to be forced to spend an eternity in such wretched company! Verily methinks the most horrid and frightful idea I can form in my own mind, is, that of a company of snarling and quarrelsome spirits, crowded like so many scorpions and adders into a den together, and there forced by the venomousness of their temper to live in continual mutiny, and be perpetually hissing and spitting poison at one another. For though those words of our Saviour, Matt. xii. 25, 26. imply that Satan's kingdom is not divided, yet they are not to be so understood as if there were any such thing as peace or concord among those rancorous spirits; for that is impossible to be imagined. No, doubtless they would be divided eternally if they could, being such con-

tinual plagues as they are to one another, and think it a mighty happiness to be shut up all alone in separate dens, where they might never see nor hear of one another more; but being chained together as they are by an adamantine fate, which they cannot withstand, they consent in this, and in this only, to oppose all good designs, and do the utmost mischief they are able. But as to all their other intercourses they are continually embroiled, and do live in an eternal variance with one another. So that their society is like that monster Scylla, whom the poets talk of, whose inferior parts were a company of dogs, that were perpetually snarling and quarrelling among themselves, and yet were inseparable from one another, as being all of them parts of the same substance.

Wherefore since to be united by indissoluble ligaments to this wretched society will be the certain fate of all factious and contentious souls, our blessed religion, whose great design is to advance our happiness, hath taken abundant care to educate our minds in quietness and peace. For hither tend all those precepts of it which require us to *follow peace with all men*, Heb. xii. 14. *to be at peace among ourselves*, 1 Thess. v. 13. *to follow after the things that make for peace*, Rom. xiv. 19. *to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*, Ephes. iv. 3. *to be of one mind, and to live in peace*, 2 Cor. xiii. 11. *and if it be possible, and as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men*, Rom. xii. 18. In a word, *to mark them that cause divisions among us, and avoid them*, Rom. xvi. 17. and to do our part, *that there be no divisions among us, but that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in*

the same judgment, 1 Cor. i. 10. The design of all which is to bind us over to the study and practice of unity and concord, and restrain us by the strictest obligations from all schismatical, factious, and turbulent behaviour in those sacred or civil societies whereof we are members. And unless we do sincerely endeavour to fulfil these obligations, however we may monopolize godliness to our own party, and claw and canonize one another, we are saints of a quite different strain from those blessed ones above, and are acted by the factious spirit of the Devil, whose business it is to foment divisions, and kindle disturbances and commotions wherever he comes. This therefore must be our great care, if we design for heaven, to root out of our tempers all inclination to contention and discord, and to compose ourselves into a sedate and peaceable, calm and gentle frame of spirit; and not only to avoid all unnecessary quarrels and contentions ourselves, but so far as in us lies to be peacemakers between others, and preserve a friendly union with and among our fellow-members. And if through human frailty and infirmity, through our own ignorance of the plausible pretences of seducers, through the too great prevalence of our worldly interest, or the principles of a bad education, it should be our misfortune to be insensibly misled into unwarrantable dissents and divisions; yet still to keep our minds in a teachable temper, and our ears open to truth and conviction, to be desirous of accommodation, and willing to hear the reason on both sides, and as soon as we are convinced of our error, to repent of our division, and immediately return to unity and peace.

Which if it be our constant practice and endea-

vour, we shall by degrees form our minds into such a peaceable and amicable temper, that when we go into the other world, where we shall be perfectly disengaged from all temporal interests, and throughly convinced of all our erroneous prejudice, our souls will be effectually contempered to the quiet and peaceable society of the blessed; who having no private interests to pursue, no particular affections to gratify, no ends or aims but what are common to them all, which is to adore, and imitate, and love that never-failing spring whence all their felicity flows, it is impossible there should be any occasion administered by any of them of any schism or rupture of communion. And so those happy people live in the most perfect unity and concord, as being all united in their ends, and tied together by their heart-strings. For they having no counter opinions or cross interest to divide them, nothing but truth shining in their minds, nothing but goodness reigning in their wills, it is impossible there should be any dissenting brother among them, any non-conformist to the blessed laws of their communion; but conspiring together as they do in the same mind and interest, and in the same peaceable intentions and affections, they must needs walk hand in hand together in a most perfect uniformity. So that if we would live for ever with these blessed folk, we must now endeavour to calm and compose ourselves into their temper, to discharge our minds, as much as we are able, of every froward and contentious humour, and reduce our wills to a perfect loathing of them; that so being qualified for their society, we may be admitted to it when we go away from this wrangling world. And then how unspeakably happy shall we

be, when with minds perfectly refined from all contention and bitterness, we shall be received into the company of those calm and sedate spirits, and bear our part in their sweet and placid conversation, wherein they freely communicate their minds to one another, without the least fierceness or insolence, capticusness or misconstruction, clamour or contention for victory; and do eternally discourse over the wise things of heaven, and still perfectly concentre both in their understandings and wills; wherein like so many stars in conjunction they mingle light with one another, and do peaceably communicate the treasures of their knowledge without the least bandying or controversy. For though some of them do doubtless know much more than others, yet there being no intermixture of error in the knowledge of any, it is impossible they should oppose or contradict one another, because whatsoever is true agrees with every thing that is true. And being thus united in mind and judgment, they freely communicate their thoughts without ever disputing one another's sentences, which renders it impossible for them ever to quarrel or disagree. So that all their communion is a perfect concord of souls; wherein there is no such thing as schism or division, as passing cruel censures, or affixing hard names, or bandying anathemas at one another; but in mind and heart they are all as perfectly one as if they were all animated by one and the same soul. And thus they live unspeakably happy in the mutual exercise of an everlasting peace, and all their conversation with one another is perfect harmony without discords.

IV. As we are rational creatures related to one another, we are obliged modestly to submit to our

superiors, and cheerfully to condescend to our inferiors, in those respective societies whereof we are members. These two I put together because they are relatives, and as such do mutually explain and contribute light to each other. Now it being necessary to the order and end of all societies, that their members should be distinguished into superior and inferior ranks and stations; that some should be trusted with the power of commanding, and others reduced to the condition of obedience, that so in this regular subordination they may every one in their several stations be obliged to aid and assist each other, and according to their several capacities to contribute to the good of the whole; which in a state of equality (wherein every man would be absolute lord of himself) cannot be expected, considering the different humours and interests by which men are acted; this, I say, being upon this account necessary, it is, upon the same account, equally necessary that they should mutually perform those offices to one another, which are proper to their respective ranks and stations. That superiors should look upon themselves as trustees for the public good, whom God hath invested with authority over others, not to domineer and gratify their own imperious wills, but to provide for and secure the commonwealth; and consequently to take care that they do not prostitute their power to their own private avarice or ambition, but that they employ it for the common good and benefit of their subjects and inferiors; that they be ready to do them all good offices, to compassionate their infirmities, consult their conveniencies, and comply with all their reasonable supplications; considering that for this end they derived their au-

thority from God, who is the fountain of authority, to whom they are accountable for their good and bad administration of it. And so for the inferiors, it is no less necessary for the common good, that they perform their parts towards those that are above them; that they behave themselves towards them with all that loyalty and modesty, respect and submission, which their place and authority calls for; that they reverence them as the vicegerents of God, and address to them as to sacred persons, and render a cheerful obedience to that divine authority that is stamped upon all their just laws and commands, considering that in their several degrees they represent the person of the great Sovereign of the world, to whom we owe an entire subjection, and consequently are in every thing to be obeyed and submitted to, that he hath not expressly countermanded. For that subjects and superiors should thus behave themselves towards one another is indispensably necessary to the welfare of all societies. For whilst the inferiors of any society do obstinately refuse to submit to the will of their superiors, and the superiors to condescend to the common good of their inferiors, they are contending together either for a confusion or a tyranny: and if the superiors prevail, tyranny follows; if the inferiors, confusion; either of which is extremely mischievous, not only to the society in general, but to each of the contending parties. For if confusion follows, it is not only the superior party suffers by being deposed from his authority, but the inferior too by being deprived of protection, and exposed to one another's rapine and violence; and if tyranny follows, it is not only the inferior party suffers by being forced upon a rigorous

and uneasy obedience, but the superior too, by being continually perplexed how to force and extort that obedience; and thus both parties suffer under the bad effects of each other's misdemeanour. So that to make our society happy, it is necessary, that whether we be superiors or inferiors, we should be of a gentle, yielding, and treatable temper, that so which rank soever we are placed in, we may be pliable either way, to a fair condescension, or a just submission. For whilst we are of obstinate, perverse, and untractable tempers, we are neither fit to be superiors nor inferiors; but must necessarily be plagues and grievances to our society, which rank or order soever we are placed in. And though in this life we have not always such a sensible experience of the evil and mischief of this malignant temper, because now it is counter-influenced by those more meek and auspicious ones that are in conjunction with it; yet when we go into eternity, we shall be confined to such a society of spirits as are all throughout of our own genius and temper. For as in the society of the blessed there is a conjunction of every virtue in every member; so there is of every vice in the society of the wicked; who do not only retain those vices in their natures, which they were here inclined and addicted to, but are also continually excited to all other vices they are capable of, by their inveterate enmity against God, which in that miserable estate is perpetually enraged, by their despair of being ever reconciled to him. So that whatsoever wicked temper we carry with us into eternity, we shall be sure to meet with it in every individual member of the society of the wicked; and consequently if we carry thither with us a perverse and untreatable temper,

that will not endure either to submit or condescend, we shall be sure to find the same humour reigning throughout all the society of the wicked. And then being eternally united to it, (as we must expect to be if we are allied to it by nature,) in what a miserable state shall we be, when every member of our society shall be of the same unconversable temper with ourselves, and we shall find none that will comply with, or endeavour to soothe and mollify our obstinacy; when all our whole society shall consist of a company of stiff and stubborn spirits, that will neither submit to nor bear with one another, but every one will have his will upon every one, so far as he is able to force and extort it; when those that are superior in might and power do all rule with a fierce and tyrannical will, and will condescend to nothing that is beneficial for their subjects; and those that are inferior do obey with a perverse and stubborn heart, and will submit to nothing but what they are forced and compelled to, and it is nothing but mere power and dread by which they rule and are ruled: in a word, when they all mutually hate and abominate each other, and those that command are a company of cruel and imperious devils, that impose nothing but grievances and plagues, and those that obey are a company of surly and untractable slaves, that submit to nothing but what they are driven to by plagues; so that plagues and grievances are both the matter and the motive of all their obedience and subjection: when this, I say, is the state of their society with one another, how is it possible but that they should be all of them in a most wretched and miserable condition? For where all is transacted by force and compulsion, (as to be

sure all is among such a company of perverse and self-willed spirits,) there every one must be supposed to be, so far as he is able, a fury and a devil to every one; and those that do compel are like so many salvage tyrants, continually vexed and enraged with stubborn oppositions and resistances, and those that are compelled, like so many obstinate galley-slaves, are continually lashed into an insufferable obedience, and forced by one torment to submit to another; and thus all their society with one another is a perpetual intercourse of mutual outrage and violence.

This being therefore the miserable fate and issue of a perverse, and stubborn, and untractable temper, the gospel, whose great design is to direct us to our happiness, doth industriously endeavour to root it out of our minds, and to plant in its room a gentle, obsequious, and condescending disposition: for hither tend all those evangelical precepts, which require us *to become weak to the weak, that we may gain them,* 1 Cor. ix. 22. *to bear with their infirmities,* Rom. xv. 2. *and support them, and be patient towards them,* 1 Thess. v. 14. And on the other hand, *to submit ourselves to our elders,* 1 Pet. v. 5. *and to those that have the rule over us,* Heb. xiii. 17. *to obey our magistrates, our parents, and our masters, to be subject to principalities, and not speak evil of dignities, to honour kings, and submit to their laws and governors,* 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. In a word, *to honour all men as they deserve,* 1 Pet. ii. 17. *and to hold good men in reputation,* Phil. ii. 29. *and in honour to prefer one another,* Rom. xii. 10. The sense of all which is, to oblige us to treat all men as becomes us in the rank and station we are placed in; to honour those that are our superiors, whether in

place or virtue; to give that modest deference to their judgments, that reverence to their persons, that respect to their virtues, and homage to their desires or commands, which the degree or kind of their superiority requires; to condescend to those that are our inferiors, and treat them with all that candour and ingenuity, sweetness and affability, that the respective distances of our state will allow; to consult their conveniencies, and do them all good offices, and pity and bear with their infirmities, so far as they are safely and wisely tolerable. By the constant practice of which, our minds will be gradually cured of all that perverseness and surliness of temper, which indisposes us to the respective duties of our relations; of all that contempt and selfishness which renders us averse to the proper duty of superiors, and of all that self-conceit and impatience of command, which indisposes us to the duty of inferiors. And our wills being once wrought into an easy pliableness, either to submission or condescension, we are in a forward preparation of mind to live under the government of heaven, where doubtless under God, the supreme lord and sovereign, there are numberless degrees of superiority and inferiority. For some are said to reap sparingly, and some abundantly; some to be rulers of five cities, and some of ten; some to be the least, and some the greatest in the kingdom of heaven: all which implies, that in that blessed state there is a great variety of degrees of glory and advancement. And indeed it cannot be otherwise in the nature of the thing; for our happiness consisting in the perfection of our natures, the more or less perfect we are, the more or less happy we must necessarily be; for

every farther degree of goodness we attain to, is a widening and enlargement of our souls for farther degrees of glory and beatitude. And accordingly when we arrive at heaven, which is the element of beatitude, we shall all be filled according to the content and measure of our capacities, and drink in more or less of its rivers of pleasure, as we are more or less enlarged to contain them. So that according as we do more and more improve ourselves in true goodness, we do naturally make more and more room in our souls for heaven, which doth always fill the vessels of glory of all sizes, and pour in happiness upon them till they all overflow and can contain no more. Since therefore they are all of them entirely resigned to and guided by right reason, there is no doubt but in these their different degrees of glory and dignity they mutually behave themselves towards one another as is most fit and becoming; and that since under God, the head and king of their society, there is from the highest to the lowest a most exact and regular subordination of members, they do every one perform their parts and duties towards every one, in all those different stations of glory they are placed in, and consequently do submit and condescend to each other, according as they are of a superior or inferior class and order. So that if when we go from hence into the other world we carry along with us a submissive and condescending frame of spirit, we shall be trained up, and predisposed to live under the blessed hierarchy of heaven; to yield a cheerful conformity to the laws and customs of it; and to render all the honours to those above, and all the condescensions to those beneath us in glory, which the statutes of that

heavenly regiment do require; in doing whereof we shall all of us enjoy a most unspeakable content and felicity. For though in the kingdom of heaven, as well as the kingdoms of the earth, there are numberless degrees of advancement and dignity, and one star there, as well as here, differeth from another star in glory; yet so freely and cheerfully do they all condescend and submit to each other, in these their respective differences of rank and station, that in the widest distances of their state and degrees of glory they all maintain the dearest intimacies and familiarities with each other, and neither those that are superior are either envied for their height or contemned for their familiarity, nor those that are inferior despised for their meanness or oppressed for their weakness. For in that blessed state, every one being best pleased with what best becomes him, it is every one's joy to behave himself towards every one as best becomes the rank and degree he is placed in; and those that are above do glory in condescending to those that are below them; and those that are below do triumph in submitting to those that are above them: and thus in all those differences of glory and dignity between them, they alternately reverence their superiors and condescend to their inferiors with the same unforced freedom and alacrity, and so do eternally converse with one another (notwithstanding all their distances) with the greatest freedom and most endearing familiarity.

And thus I have endeavoured to give you an account of the first sort of means by which heaven, the great end of a Christian, is to be obtained; viz. the proximate and immediate ones, which compre-

hend the practice of all those virtues, which, as rational creatures related to God and one another, we stand eternally obliged to; and shewed how they are all of them essential parts of the Christian life, and how heaven itself consists in the perfection of them.

So that upon the whole, the best definition I can give of the state of heaven is this, That it is the everlasting, perfect exercise of all those human, divine, and social virtues, which as rational animals, related to God and all his rational creation, we are indispensably and everlastingly obliged to. And therefore, since the only natural way by which we can acquire and perfect these virtues is use and practice, it hence necessarily follows, that the practice of them is the only direct and immediate means by which that heavenly state is to be purchased and obtained.

SECT. IV.

Wherein, for a conclusion of this chapter, some motives and considerations are proposed, to persuade men to the practice of these heavenly virtues.

IT having been largely shewed in the foregoing sections, that the practice of all those virtues which are included in the heavenly part of the Christian life tends directly towards the heavenly state, and naturally grows up into it, I shall now briefly conclude this argument with some motives to persuade men to the practice of them. And these I shall deduce,

1. From the suitableness of them to our present state and relation.

2. From the dignity,
3. From the freedom,
4. From the pleasure,
5. From the ease,
6. And lastly, from the necessity of them.

I. Therefore let us consider the suitableness of these virtues to our present state and relation: for in our baptism, wherein we gave up our names to Christ, we became denizens and freemen of heaven, and were received into a covenant, that upon performance of our part of it actually entitled us to all its blessed privileges and immunities. So that in that sacred solemnity of our initiation into the Christian covenant, we contracted a strict alliance with the blessed people of heaven, and became their brethren and fellow-citizens: for so the apostle tells us, Ephes. ii. 19. *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;* and *the household of God* consists of the whole congregation of the saints, whether militant upon earth, or triumphant in heaven. For so, Ephes. iii. 15. it is called *the whole family of heaven and earth.* So that we are confederates with them in the same covenant, even that by which they hold all the joys and glories they are possessed of; and if we will do as they have done, that is, perform the conditions of it, we shall be cohabitants with them in the same glory. We are adopted children of the same Father with them, members of the same family, coheirs of the promise of the same glory, brethren of the same confraternity and corporation; and all the difference between them and us is only this, that we are abroad, and they at home; we are on this, and they

on the other side Jordan; we in the acquest, and they in the possession of the heavenly Canaan; to which we are entitled as well as they, and that by the same grant from the supreme Proprietor. So that by calling ourselves Christians we do in other words call ourselves brethren, coheirs, and fellow-citizens with the blessed inhabitants of heaven. And what can be more suitable to such a profession than for us to live as they do, and the continued practice of all these heavenly virtues? And what a shame will it be for us, that are by profession their brethren, not to copy and imitate their behaviour; that we who are below stairs in the same house and family should abandon ourselves to sensuality and devilishness, whilst our blessed kindred above are entertaining themselves with those heavenly pleasures, which result from the perfect exercise of all heavenly virtue; that we should be neglecting, provoking, and blaspheming God, whilst they are contemplating and admiring, loving and praising, imitating and obeying him; that we should be cheating and defrauding, envying and despising, maligning and embroiling one another, whilst they are conversing together with the greatest freedom and integrity, with the most obliging respects and condescensions, and in the strictest unity and dearest friendship. What a vile reproach are our wicked lives to the conversation of these our fellow-citizens above! For while we profess ourselves their brethren, those who understand no better will be prone to suspect that they live as we do; and how would such a suspicion tempt an honest heathen to renounce heaven, as the Indian king did, when he was told that the bloody Spaniards went thither; and

rather choose to go down to the darkest hell, than to a heaven that is peopled with such diabolical company! So that by our wicked and unsaint-like lives, we take an effectual course to bring heaven itself into disgrace, and to cast such a slander on its blessed inhabitants, as may justly expose them to the scorn and hatred of all those honest minds, that know them no otherwise than by us their unworthy and degenerate fellow-citizens: and could those blessed spirits look down from their thrones of bliss, and see what a company of wretched Christians there are that claim kindred with them, they would doubtless be ashamed of the relation, and count themselves highly dishonoured and disgraced by it, and heartily wish that we would disown our sins or our baptism, and openly renounce their alliance, or more strictly imitate their manners. And really it is a burning shame, that we should profess ourselves fellow-citizens with them for no other purpose but to scandalize and reproach them; and it were heartily to be wished, even for the credit of heaven, and of our blessed brethren that inhabit it, that if we will not be so generous as to follow their example, we would at least be so honest as to renounce their kindred, and not claim a relation to their family merely to shame and disgrace them.

II. Consider the honour and dignity of the heavenly life: for if we may estimate actions by the examples from whence they are copied, as in other cases we are wont to do, doubtless the most noble and honourable are such as are copied from the lives of the glorious inhabitants of heaven. For besides that sublime rank of dignity whereunto they are advanced, as being the courtiers and immediate

attendants of the Almighty Sovereign of heaven and earth; a dignity which by how much more it excels that of the greatest potentate of this world, by so much more it authorizes the examples of those that wear it; besides this, I say, their examples being the most perfect copies and imitations of the life of God, are thereby rendered not only more eminent and glorious, but also more obliging and authoritative. For by following them, we follow God, who is the standard of all rational perfection, and who, by being the first and best in the whole kind of rational entities, is the supreme rule and measure of them all. So that in imitating the blessed people above, we imitate those who in their place and station do live at the same rate as the great God doth in his, and regulate themselves by the same infallible reason. We do what God himself would do if he were in our place, and what the Son of God himself did do when he was in our natures; and there is no other difference between his life and ours, but what necessarily arises out of our different states and relations. And what more glorious thing can we do, than to live by the pattern of their lives, who live so exactly by the pattern of God's? For the example of living which those blessed people set us is the example of God at second-hand; it is his most rational life transcribed, so far as it is rationally imitable, that is, so far as it is honourable and glorious for a rational creature to transcribe it. For in the state of finite creatures, they live in a perfect conformity to the same immutable reason, whereby God regulates himself in the state of an infinite Creator. So that their example is an imitation in kind of all those particular excellencies in him, which they may and ought

to imitate; and it is an imitation in general of that eternal decorum with respect to conditions and states, which he constantly observes in all his transactions with his creatures. And as their example is a perfect copy of God's, so it is a copy fitted in all particulars for our use and imitation. For it doth not only describe to us all those particular excellencies in him which are to be imitated by us, but all those particular duties to which that eternal law of equity and goodness by which he governs himself in his state requires of us in ours; and shews not only wherein we are to imitate him in kind, but also wherein we are to follow him in general, in doing what is most fit for us in the state and relation of creatures, even as he doth what is most fit for him in the state and relation of a God and Creator. So that the example of those heavenly inhabitants is the example of God himself, exactly fitted and attempered to the state and condition of creatures. For just as they live, the all-wise and all-good God himself would live, if he were in their state and relation. Wherefore by imitating their heavenly lives and manners, we do ourselves the greatest right, and do most effectually consult the glory and honour of our own natures. For whilst we tread in theirs, we tread in the footsteps of God, and have his glorious example to warrant and justify our actions: we behave ourselves as it becomes the children of the King of heaven, and so far as it consists with the condition of creatures, we live like so many gods in the world; which is doubtless the utmost height of honour and glory that any rational ambition can aspire to. So that methinks, had we any spark of true gallantry and bravery of mind in us, we should

despise all other kinds of life but this, and pity those gilded bubbles that have nothing to boast of but their fine clothes, and great estates, and empty titles of honour; we should look upon all other dignities as the trifling playgames of children in comparison with this, of living like the great nobility of heaven, that do all live by the pattern of the life of God.

III. Consider the great freedom and liberty of a heavenly life. So long as we live earthly and sensual lives, our freeborn souls are imprisoned in sense, and all their motions are circumscribed and bounded within the narrow sphere of sensitive goods and enjoyments. So that when we would follow our reason, and do as that prescribes and dictates, we find ourselves miserably hampered and entangled; the lusts of our flesh do hang like gyves so heavily upon us, that whenever our reason and conscience call, we cannot move with any freedom, but are fain to labour at every step, and after a few faint essays are utterly tired under the weight of our reluctant inclinations. So that the good which many times we would, we do not, the law in our minds being counter-voted by the law in our members. Our reason and conscience tell us, that we ought to love God above all, to adore and worship him, and surrender up ourselves to his command and disposal; and we are many times strongly inclined to follow its dictates and directions; but, alas! when we come to put them in execution, we find so many pull-backs within us, so many strong and stubborn aversions to our good inclinations, that we have not the power to do as we would, or to dispose of ourselves according to our own most reasonable desires; but like miserable slaves that are chained to the oar, we

are fain to row on whithersoever our imperious lusts do command us, though we plainly see we are running on a rock, and invading our own destruction. And as we are not free in this ill state of life to follow our reason, so neither are we free to follow our lusts. For as when we would follow our reason, our lusts cling about and entangle us; so when we would follow our lusts, our reason clogs and restrains us; and by objecting to us the indecency and danger, the infinite turpitude and hazard of our sinful courses, lays so many rubs in our way, that we cannot sin with any freedom, but whithersoever we go, we walk like prisoners with the shackles of shame and fear on our heels; so that which way soever we turn ourselves, we find that our power to dispose of ourselves is under a great restraint and confinement, and we can neither get leave of our lusts to follow our reason, nor of our reason to follow our lusts. For when we attempt the latter, our reason curbs us with shame and fear; and when we endeavour the former, our appetite bridles us with dislike and aversation. In this extremity therefore, what is to be done that we may be free? Why, the case is plain; we must resolve to conquer either our reason or our lusts: if we conquer our reason, (which we shall find by far the harder task of the two,) we shall acquire the freedom of devils and brutes, the freedom to do mischief, and wallow in the mire without shame or remorse: but if we conquer our lusts, we acquire the freedom of men; yea of saints and of angels; the freedom to act reasonably without reluctance or aversation; and this being much more easily to be acquired than the former, I dare appeal to any man's reason, which of the two is in itself

most eligible. If therefore we would vindicate our rational freedom, we must resolve to shake off those slavish fetters, our brutish and our devilish appetites, that do so perpetually turmoil and encumber us in all our virtuous attempts and rational operations; we must tie up ourselves from executing their commands, and serving their wicked wills and pleasures, and heartily resolve to act as it becomes us in the capacity of rational creatures related to God and one another. And then, though at first we must expect to find ourselves confined and straitened by our vicious aversations, we shall be immediately released from all that shame and fear which did so continually curb us in the career of our wickedness; and even our vicious aversations (if we courageously persist in our good resolution) will grow weaker and weaker, and be every day less and less cumbersome to us, till it is totally extinguished. And then we shall feel ourselves entirely restored into our own power, and be able, without check or control, to dispose of ourselves and all our motions, according as it shall seem to us most fit and reasonable; then we shall act with the greatest vigour and freedom, having no counter-striving principles to restrain or retard us, no vicious aversations on the one side, or guilty shame or fear on the other, to counterpoise us in our rational motions; then we shall move without check or confinement in a large and noble sphere; for we shall be pleased with what is fit, and wise, and good, without any reserve or exception, and we shall do what we please without any let or hinderance. So that by engaging ourselves in the heavenly life, we enter into a state of glorious liberty; and if we constantly persist in it,

and do still prevalently list to live as becomes us, we shall be more and more free to live as we list, till at last we are arrived into a perfect liberty, wherein we shall live without restraint or control, without check of conscience, or reluctance of inclination, which are the two main bars that confine and straiten men in their operations. If therefore we would ever be free, let us immediately come off from our vicious courses to the practice of this divine and heavenly life, wherein by degrees, if we courageously hold on, we shall wear off those shackles that do so miserably hamper and entangle us; and then we shall be entirely free to do whatsoever our reason dictates to us; then we shall *run the ways of God's commandments*, and, like our blessed brethren above, be all life, and spirit, and wing, in the discharge of our duty to him.

IV. Consider the pleasure of this heavenly life. It is true there is a sort of pleasure that results from all the acts of a sensual and earthly conversation; but we find by experience, that though in the pursuit it strangely allures and enchants us, yet in the fruition it always disappoints our expectation, and scarce performs in the enjoyment one half of what it promised to our hopes; and at the best it is but a present and transient satisfaction of our brutish sense, a satisfaction that dims the light, sullies the beauty, impairs the vigour, and restrains the activity of the mind; diverting it from better operations, and indisposing it to the fruition of purer delights; leaving no comfortable relish or gladsome memory behind it, but oftentimes going out in a stink, and determining in bitterness, regret, and disgrace. But in each act of this divine and celestial life, there is

something of the pleasure of heaven, something of those divine refreshments and consolations upon which the good people of heaven do live. For the greatest part of their heaven springs from within their own bosoms, even from the conformity of their souls to the heavenly state, and the sprightful outgoings of their minds and affections towards the heavenly objects; from their contemplating and loving, their praising and adoring the most high God; from their imitation of his perfections, their subjection to his will, and dependence on his veracity; all which acts, as I have already shewed, have the most ravishing pleasures appendant to them, and are so necessary to the felicity of rational creatures, that the wit of man cannot fancy a rational heaven without them. For the heaven of a rational creature consisting in the most intense and vigorous exercise of its rational faculties about the most suitable and convenient objects, what object can be more convenient to such faculties than that almighty Sovereign of beings, whose power is the spring of all truth, and whose nature is the pattern of all goodness: so that without a perfect union of our minds, and wills, and affections with God, there can be no possible idea of a perfect heaven of rational pleasures; but in this blessed union lies the very soul and quintessence of heaven. Since therefore in every act of every virtue of the divine life there is at least an imperfect union of the soul with God, it necessarily follows, that there must be some degree of the pleasure of heaven in every one. So that if we do not experience much greater joy and delight in the acts of this divine life than ever we did in the highest epicurisms and sensualities, it is not because there

are not much greater in them, but because we never exerted them with that sprightliness and vigour as we do our sensual appetites and perceptions; because we are clogged in the exercise of them, either by false principles, or bodily indispositions, or sinful aversations. But if we would take the pains to inure and accustom ourselves to these heavenly acts, we should find by degrees they would grow natural and easy to us; and our souls would be so habituated, contempered, and disposed to them, that we should upon all occasions exert them with great freedom and enlargement: and then we should begin to feel and relish the pleasure of them; then we should perceive a heaven of delight springing up from within us, and unfolding itself in each beatifical act of our heavenly conversation; then we should find ourselves under the central force of heaven most sweetly drawn along and attracted thither by the powerful magnetism of its joys and pleasures; and in every act of our celestial behaviour we should have some foretaste of the celestial happiness. So that now we should no longer need external arguments to convince us of the truth and reality of that blessed state; for we should feel it within ourselves, and be able to penetrate into its blessed mysteries by the light of an infallible experience. Now we should have no occasion to search the records of heaven to assure ourselves of our interest in it; for by a most sensible earnest of heaven within us we should be as fully satisfied of our title to it, as if one of the winged messengers of heaven should come down from thence, and tell us that he saw our names enrolled in the book of life. And with this sweet experience of heaven within us, we should go on to heaven with

unspeakable triumph and alacrity, being tolled all along from step to step with the alluring relishes of its joys and pleasures; and in every vigorous exercise of every virtue of the heavenly life, we should have such lively tastes and sensations of heaven, as would continually excite us to exercise them more vigorously; and still the more vigorously we exerted them, the more of heaven we should taste in them; and so the vigour of our virtue would increase the pleasure of it, and the pleasure of it increase its vigour, till both are perfected and grown up into the blessed state of heaven. Wherefore as we do love pleasure, which is the great invitation to action, let us be persuaded once for all to make a through experiment of the heavenly life; and if upon a sufficient trial you do not find it the most pleasant kind of life that ever you led, if you do not experience a far more noble satisfaction in it than ever you did in all your studied and artificial luxuries, I give you leave to brand me for an impostor.

V. Consider the great repose and ease of a heavenly life and conversation. In every sensual and devilish course of life, we find, by experience, there is a great deal of uneasiness and disquiet. For the mind is disturbed, the conscience galled, the affections divided into opposite factions, and the whole soul in a most diseased and restless posture. And indeed it is no wonder it should be so, since it is in an unnatural state and condition. For whilst it is in any unreasonable course of action, the very frame and constitution of it, as it is a rational being, suffers an unnatural violence, and is all unjointed and disordered. And therefore, as a body when its bones are out is never at rest till they are set again; so a

rational soul, when its faculties and powers are dislocated and put out of their natural, i. e. rational course of action, is continually restless and disturbed, and always tossing to and fro, shifting from one posture to another, turning itself from this to the other object and enjoyment, but finding no ease or satisfaction in any, until it is restored again to its own rational course of motion, and that it is to act and move towards God, for whom it was made, and in whom alone it can be happy. And if its reason were not strangely dozed and stupified with sense and sensitive pleasure, it would doubtless be a thousand times more restless and dissatisfied in this its preternatural state than it is; it would feel much more distraction of mind, anguish of conscience, and tumult of affections than it is now capable of, amidst the numerous enjoyments and diversions of this world. For as a musical instrument, were it a living thing, would doubtless be sensible of harmony as its proper state, (as a great author of our own ingeniously discourses,) and abhor discord and dissonancy as a thing preternatural to it; even so were our reason but alive and awake within us, our souls, which, according to their natural frame, were made unison with God, would be exquisitely sensible of those divine virtues wherein its consonancy consists, as of that which is its proper state and native complexion; and complain as sadly of the vicious distempers of its faculties, as the body doth of wounds and diseases; it would be perfectly sick of every unreasonable motion, and never be able to rest till its disjointed faculties were rectified, and all its disordered strings set in tune again; which being once effected, (as it will quickly be in a continued course

of heavenly action,) we shall presently find our souls disburdened of all those malignant humours that do so perpetually disease, disquiet, and disturb us. For by relying upon God, we shall totally quit and discharge ourselves of all those restless cares and anxieties, which circle and prick us like a crown of thorns; by our hearty submission to his heavenly will, we shall ease our consciences of all that horror, rage, and anguish which proceeds from the envenomed stings of our guilt; by loving, admiring, and adoring him, our affections will be cured of all that inconsistence and inordinacy that render them so tumultuous and disquieting. And these things being once accomplished, the sick and restless soul will presently find itself in perfect health and ease. For now all her jarring faculties being tuned to the musical laws of reason, there will be a perfect harmony in her nature, and she will have no disquieting principle within her; nothing but calm and gentle thoughts, soft and sweet reflections, tame and manageable affections; nothing but what abundantly contributes to her repose and satisfaction. So that do but imagine what an ease the body enjoys, when after a lingering sickness it recovers a sound constitution, and feels a lively vigour possessing every part, and actuating the whole; such and much more is the ease and quiet of the soul, when, by the diligent practice of the heavenly life, it feels itself recovered from the languishing sickness of a sensual and devilish nature. Now she is no more tossed and agitated in a stormy sea of restless thoughts and guilty reflections, no more scorched with impatience, or drowned with grief, or shook with fear, or bloated with pride or ambition; but all her affections are

resigned to the blessed empire of a spiritual mind, and clothed in the livery of her reason. Now all the war and contest between the law in her members and the law in her mind is ended in a glorious victory and happy peace; and those divided streams, her will and conscience, her passions and her reason, are united in one channel, and flow towards one and the same ocean: and being thus jointed and knit together by the ties and ligaments of virtue, the soul is perfectly well and easy, and enjoys a most sweet repose within itself. Wherefore, as you value your own rest and ease, and would not be endlessly turmoiled and disquieted, be persuaded heartily to engage yourselves in the course of a heavenly conversation; and then, though at first you must expect to find some difficulty in it, by reason of its contrariety to your corrupt natures, yet if you vigorously persist in it you will find the difficulty will soon wear off, and then it will be all ease and pleasure. For when our nature is depraved, either by sensuality or devilishness, it is like a bone out of joint, full of pain while it is out, and much more painful while it is setting; but as soon as that is done, it is immediately well and easy.

VI. And lastly, consider the absolute necessity of this heavenly life and conversation. For besides that God exacts it of us as an indispensable condition of our happiness, and hath assured us, that *if we live after the flesh we shall die*, and that *without holiness we shall never see the Lord;* besides this, I say, an heavenly conversation is in the nature of the thing necessary to qualify us for heaven; or, as the apostle expresses it, *to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.* For hap-

piness being a relative thing, implies, in the very nature of it, a mutual correspondence between the objects which present us with happiness, and the faculties which taste and enjoy them; and be the objects never so good in themselves, never so pregnant with pleasure and bliss, yet if they do not agree with the faculties whereunto they are objected, instead of blessing, they will but afflict and torment them; and if a man were placed in the midst of heaven, among all the ravishing fruitions with which that blessed place abounds, yet unless his mind and temper did suit and agree with them, they would be so many miseries and vexations to him, and he would be afflicted even in Abraham's bosom, and grope for heaven in the midst of paradise. So that supposing that God were so unreasonably fond of the happiness of wicked souls, as to prefer it before the honour of his government, and the purity of his nature, and the sanction of his laws, yet still there is an invincible obstacle behind, that must render their future felicity impossible; and that is, that it cannot be without a plain contradiction to the nature of things, the temper of wicked souls being wholly repugnant to all the felicities of the other world: so that if they were all set before them, they would not be able to enjoy them, but must be forced to pine and famish amidst all that plenty of delights, there being no viand in all that heavenly entertainment that they would relish any sweetness in. And therefore if God should so far pardon them, as not to punish them himself by any immediate stroke of vengeance, that would be the utmost favour that his omnipotent goodness could do for them whilst they continued in their sins; which, notwithstanding such

a pardon, would for ever continue them extremely miserable. And what great matter doth a pardon signify to a malefactor that is dying of the stone or strangury? He could but have died though he had not been pardoned, and die he must though he be. And just as little almost would it signify to a depraved soul to be pardoned and absolved by God, whilst it hath a disease within that preys upon its vitals, and hastens it on to a certain ruin: for it could have been but miserable in the future life, if it had not been pardoned; and miserable it must be, if it continue wicked, whether it be pardoned or no. For it is not so much the place as the state that makes either heaven or hell; and the state of heaven and hell consists in perfect holiness and wickedness; and proportionably as we do improve in either of these, so we do approach towards the one state or the other. For as heaven is the centre of all that is virtuous, pure, and holy, and all that is good tends thither by a natural sympathy; so hell is the centre of all impiety and wickedness, and all that is bad doth naturally press and sink down thither, as towards its proper place and element; and should not the divine vengeance concern itself to exclude wicked souls out of heaven, yet their own wickedness would do it: for that is a place of such inaccessible light and purity, that no impurity or wickedness can approach it, but must of necessity be beaten off with the dreadful lightnings of its glory, and tumbled headlong down as oft as it essays to climb up thither; as on the other hand, should not God by an immediate vengeance precipitate wicked souls into hell, yet their own wickedness, by the mighty weight of its own nature, would inevitably press and sink

them down into that miserable condition. What egregious nonsense therefore is it for wicked men to talk of going to heaven. Alas! poor creatures, what would you do there? There are no wanton amours among those heavenly lovers; no rivers of wine among their rivers of pleasure to gratify your unbounded sensuality; no parasites to flatter your lofty pride; no miseries to feed your meager envy; no mischiefs to tickle your devilish revenge; nothing but chaste and divine, pure and spiritual enjoyments, such as your brutish and devilish appetites will eternally loathe and nauseate. Wherefore if we mean to go to heaven, and to be happy there, we must now endeavour to dispose and attemper our minds to it, which is no other way to be done, but by leading a heavenly life and conversation; which by degrees will habituate and naturalize our souls to the heavenly virtues, and so work and inlay them into the frame and temper of our minds, that it will be our greatest pleasure to be exerting and exercising them: and then our souls will be dressed and made ready for heaven; and when we go from hence to take possession of its joys, they will be all so agreeable to our prepared appetites, that we shall presently fall to and feed upon them with infinite gust and relish. But till by living a heavenly life we have disposed ourselves for heaven, we utterly are incapable of enjoying it. So that now things are reduced to this issue, that either our sins or our souls must die, and we must necessarily shake hands either with heaven or our lusts. And therefore, unless we value eternal happiness so little, as to exchange it for the sordid and trifling pleasures of sin, and unless we love our sins so well as to ransom

them with the blood of our immortal souls, it concerns us speedily to engage ourselves in this heavenly life and conversation: for this is an eternal and immutable law, that if we will be wicked we must be miserable.

CHAP. IV.

Concerning the militant or warfaring part of the Christian life, by which we are to acquire and perfect the heavenly virtues; shewing how effectually all the duties of it conduce thereunto.

HAVING in the former chapter given a large account of the heavenly part of the Christian life, and shewn how directly and immediately the practice of all the virtues that are comprehended in it tends to the heavenly state, and how naturally they all grow into eternal happiness; I shall in the next place endeavour to give some brief account of that part of the Christian life which is purely militant, and which wholly consists of those instrumental duties, by the use of which we are to conquer the difficulties of those heavenly virtues, and to acquire and perfect them; which difficulties, as I shewed before, chap. ii. are the inbred corruptions of our own nature, together with those manifold temptations from without, by which they are continually provoked and excited. And so to subdue and conquer these, as that they may neither take us off from, nor clog and indispose us in, the exercise of the heavenly virtues, is the great design and business of this warfaring part of the Christian life.

That I may therefore handle it distinctly, I shall divide it into three parts, and endeavour with as much brevity as I can, first, to explain the duties of each

part, and to shew how they all conduce to our conquering the difficulties of the heavenly virtues, and to the acquiring and perfecting them; and, secondly, to press the duties of each part with proper and suitable arguments.

In this part of our Christian life therefore, there is,

1. Our beginning, or entrance into it; which is in scripture called, *Repentance from dead works.*

2. Our course and progress in it; and this is nothing but a holy life.

3. Our perfecting and consummation of it; and this is final perseverance in well-doing: each of which have their proper and peculiar duties, which I shall endeavour in this chapter to explain and enforce.

SECT. I.

Concerning those duties that are proper to our beginning and entrance into this warfaring part of our Christian life, shewing how they all conduce to the subduing of sin, and acquiring the heavenly virtues.

THIS first part of our militant life being nothing but our initial repentance, or the first turning of our souls to God for a state of wilful sin and rebellion, the duties that are proper to it, and by which this turn of our souls is to be introduced and performed, may be reduced to these six heads:

1. A hearty and firm belief of the truth of our religion.

2. A due consideration of its motives, and a balancing of them with the hardships and difficulties we are to undergo.

3. A deep and through conviction of our great need of a mediator to render us acceptable to God.

4. A hearty sorrow, shame, and remorse for our sins past.

5. Earnest prayer to God for aid and assistance to enable us effectually to renounce them.

6. A serious and well-weighed resolution to forsake and abandon them for ever.

I. It is necessary to our good beginning of this our Christian warfare, that we should heartily believe the truth and reality of our religion. For our hearty belief of the gospel is in scripture represented as the main and principal weapon by which we are to combat against the world and our own lusts. And hence it is called *the shield of faith*, and *the breastplate of faith*, which are the two principal parts of armour of defence; denoting that an hearty belief of the gospel is the principal defence of a Christian against all the fiery darts of temptation; the armour of proof that guards our innocence, and renders us invulnerable in all our spiritual conflicts. For, *above all things*, saith the apostle, *take the shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one*, Ephes. vi. 16. And as it is the principal part of our defensive, so it is also of our offensive armour: for so we find all the victories and triumphs of those glorious heroes, Heb. xi. attributed to this irresistible weapon of their faith. It was by faith that they despised crowns, confronted the anger of kings, and triumphed over the bitterest torments and afflictions; *by faith that they wrought righteously, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, and out of weakness were made strong*. Nay, so great a share hath faith in the successes of our Christian warfare, that it is called by

the apostle *the good fight of faith*, 1 Tim. vi. 12. and St. John assures us, that *this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*, 1 John v. 4.

For if we firmly believe the gospel, that will furnish us with undeniable answers to return to all temptations, and enable us infinitely to outbid the world, whatsoever it should proffer us for our innocence. For our belief of the gospel carries in the one hand infinitely greater goods, and in the other infinitely greater evils, to allure and bind us fast to our duty, than any the world can propose, to entice or terrify us from it. For on the one hand it discovers to us those immortal regions of the blessed, which are the proper seat and pure element of happiness; where the blessed inhabitants live in a continual fruition of their utmost wishes, being every moment entertained with fresh and enravishing scenes of pleasure; where all their happiness is eternal, and all their eternity nothing else but one continued act of love, and praise, and joy, and triumph; where there are no sighs or tears; no intermixtures of sorrow or misery; but every heart is full of joy, and every joy is a quintessence, and every happy moment is crowned with some fresh and new enjoyment. On the other hand, it sets before our eyes a most frightful and amazing prospect of those dismal shades of horror, where mighty numbers of condemned ghosts perpetually wander to and fro, tormented with endless rage and despair; where they always burn without consuming, always faint but never die, being forced to languish out a long eternity in unpitied sighs and groans: and after such a prospect as this, what poor inconsiderable trifles will all the goods and evils of this world ap-

pear to us! But yet unless we believe the reality of them, how great soever they may be in themselves, they will signify no more to our hope and fear (which are the master-springs of our action) than if they were so many golden dreams or lifeless scarecrows. For all proposals of good and evil do work upon the minds of men proportionably as they are believed and assented to; as that which is not true, is not; so that which we do not believe, is to us as if it were not. How then is it possible we should be moved by that good or evil which we do not believe, and in which, by consequence, we cannot apprehend ourselves concerned?

Wherefore in our entrance into the Christian warfare it is highly necessary that we do not take up our faith at a venture, and believe winking, without knowing why or wherefore; but that we should, so far as we are able, impartially examine the evidences of our religion, and search into the grounds of its credibility, that so we may be able to give some reason to ourselves and others of the hope that is in us. For which end it will be needful that we should read, and impartially consider, some of the apologies for the Christian religion; of which we have sundry excellent ones in our own language[a]; and if we will but take the pains to instruct ourselves in the plain and easy evidences of Christianity, we shall quickly see abundant cause to assent to it; and then our faith, being founded on a firm basis of reason, will be able to bid defiance to the world, and to outstand the most furious storms of temptation.

II. To our good beginning of this our Christian

[a] Dr. Stillingfleet's Origines; Dr. Patrick's Translation of Grotius; Sir Charles Wolsely.

warfare, it is also necessary that we should duly consider the motives of our religion, and balance them with the hardships and difficulties we are to undergo. For thus our Saviour makes consideration a necessary introduction to our Christian warfare, Luke xiv. 28. where he compares men's rushing headlong into the difficulties of the Christian life without consideration, to a man's resolving to build a tower without counting the charge of it, or a king's going to war without ever considering beforehand, whether with his army of ten thousand he be able to encounter his enemy with twenty: by both which comparisons he intimates to us the unprosperous issue of men's listing themselves under his banner to combat the Devil, the world, and their own lusts, without ever considering beforehand either their own strength or the enemies, the arguments with which they must fight, or the difficulties that will cross and oppose them. So that when they come to execute their rash resolutions, there start up so many difficulties in their way which they never thought of, and against which they took no care to forearm themselves, that they have not the heart and courage to stand before them; but after a few faint attempts are presently sounding a cowardly retreat.

For indeed consideration is the life and soul of faith, that animates and actuates its principles, and elicits and draws forth all their natural power and energy. And let the truths we believe be never so weighty and momentous in themselves, never so apt to spirit and invigorate us, yet unless we seriously consider and apply them to our wills and affections, and take the pains to extract out of them their na-

tive vigour and efficacy, and to infuse it into our faculties and powers, they will lie like so many dead notions in our minds, and never impart to us the least degree of spiritual courage and activity. And accordingly our Saviour attributes the ill success of God's word in the hearts of men, (which he compares to the highway, the stony and thorny ground,) either to their not considering it at all, or to their not considering it deeply enough, or to their not considering it long enough. Either the divine truths which they heard went no farther than their ears, and so lay openly exposed, like so many loose corns upon the highway, to be picked up by the fowls of the air; or if it entered into their mind and consideration, it was so slightly and superficially, that, like corn sown in a rocky ground, it had not depth enough to take root, to fasten and grow into their minds, and digest into principles of action; or if they at present received it into their deeper and more serious consideration, it was but for a little while; for by and by they permit their worldly cares and pleasures, like thorns, to spring up in their thoughts and choke it, before it was arrived to any maturity: but that which rendered it so prosperous and fruitful in good and honest hearts was, that having heard the word, they kept it, i. e. retained it in their thoughts and consideration, and so *brought forth fruit with patience*, Luke viii. 12—15. So that to the making of a good beginning in religion, it is not only necessary that we should ponder the motives and arguments of religion, and balance them with the difficulties of it, but that we should revolve and repeat them in our minds, till we have represented to ourselves with the utmost life and

reality, whatsoever makes for and against our entrance into the Christian warfare; and upon our having weighed them over and over in the scales of an even and impartial judgment, we have brought the debate to this result and conclusion, that there is infinitely more weight in the arguments of religion to persuade us to it, than in all the difficulties of it to dishearten us from it. For unless we enter into religion forearmed with the motives and forewarned of the difficulties of it, we shall never be able to stand our ground; but finding more opposition than we expected, and having not a sufficient strength of argument to bear up against it, we shall quickly repent of our rash undertaking, and be forced to retreat from it with shame and dishonour. For this is usually the issue of those rash and unsettled purposes which men make in the heats of their passion; when they have been warmed by some pathetic discourse, or startled by some great danger, or chafed into a displeasure against their sins, by the sense of some very dolorous accident whereinto they have been betrayed by them: in these or such like cases, it is usual with men to make hasty resolutions of amendment, without considering either the matters which they resolve upon, or the motives which should support their resolution; and so finding when they come to practice, more difficulty in the matter than they are aware of, and having not sufficient motives to carry them through it, their resolution flags in the execution, and very often yields to the next temptation which encounters them.

Now though I do not deny but that those heats of passion are good opportunities to begin our religion in, and if wisely improved will very much contribute

to our voyage heavenwards, and like a brisk gale of wind render it much more expedite and easy; yet if in these heats we resolve too soon, without a due consideration of all particulars, and of the difficulties on the one side, and the arguments on the other, it is hardly possible that our resolution should ever prove a lasting principle of goodness. For when we resolve inconsiderately, we resolve to do we know not what, and our resolution includes a thousand particulars that we are not aware of; most of which being repugnant to our vicious inclinations, will, when we come to practise them, be attended with such difficulties as will easily startle our weak resolution, which having not a sufficient foundation of reason to support it, will never be able to outstand those boisterous storms of temptation whereunto it will be continually exposed. If therefore we mean our resolution should hold out, and commence a living principle of goodness, we must found it in a through consideration both of the duties and difficulties of religion, and of the motives which should engage us to embrace it; we must set before our minds all the sins we must part with, and all the duties we must submit to, and fairly represent to ourselves all the difficulties and temptations wherewith we must engage; and as much as in us lies, render them actual and present to us, by supposing ourselves already engaged in our spiritual warfare, and surrounded with all the temptations, both from within and without, that we can reasonably expect will oppose themselves against us; and having thus placed ourselves in the midst of the difficulties of religion, we must never cease urging ourselves with the great arguments and motives of it, till we have

throughly persuaded our stubborn wills, and obtained of them an explicit consent to every duty that calls for our consent and resolution.

III. To our good beginning of the Christian warfare it is also necessary that we be deeply and throughly convinced of our great need of a mediator, to make a propitiation for our sins, and render us acceptable to God. For it is to convince us of this necessary truth that the scripture doth so expressly declare, that as *there is one God,* so *there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,* 1 Tim. ii. 5. that *if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,* and that *he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world;* and that *it is for his name sake that our sins are forgiven,* 1 John ii. 1, 2, 12. that *we have redemption through his blood,* Ephes. i. 7. and that *without the shedding his blood there is no remission,* and that *it was by the sacrifice of himself that Christ put away sin,* Heb. ix. 22, 26. that *we are accepted of God through his beloved Son,* Ephes. i. 6. that *Christ is entered into heaven, now to appear in the presence of God for us,* Heb. ix. 24. and that *there he ever lives to make intercession for us,* Heb. vii. 25. that *it is through him that we have access unto the Father,* Ephes. ii. 18. and *by him that we have admittance to his grace and favour,* Rom. v. 2. The design of all which is, throughly to convince us of this great truth, that by our apostasy from God, and rebellion against him, we have all rendered ourselves so very obnoxious to his vengeance, that he would not pardon us upon any less atonement than the precious blood, nor ad-

mit us into favour upon any less motive than the powerful intercession, of his own Son; that by the heinousness of our guilt we have so highly incensed the Father of mercies against us, that no less consideration than the death and advocation of the greatest and dearest person in the whole world, will move him to admit of our repentance, and listen to our supplications. And certainly next to exacting the punishment due to our sins at our own hands, the most dreadful severity he could have expressed was to resolve not to remit it upon any other consideration than that of his own Son's undergoing it in our stead; by which he hath given us the greatest reason that heaven and earth could afford, to tremble at his justice, even whilst we are enclosed in the arms of his mercy.

This therefore we ought to be deeply and throughly convinced of, that our sins have set us at such a distance from God, that it is nothing but the blood of Christ will reconcile him to us; and that though without our repentance he will never be reconciled to us, yet it is not for the sake of that or any thing else we can do, that he will be induced to receive us into favour, but only for the sake of that precious sacrifice which his eternal Son hath offered up for us. The firm persuasion and consideration of which will mightily overawe our minds, and imprint upon them such ghastly and horrible apprehensions of sin, as will scare us from all thoughts of compliance with it; the dreadful demonstration which God hath given us of his righteous severity against it in the very reason of his pardoning it, will effectually antidote us against all our sinful securities and confidences: for this way of God's pardoning us upon

the sacrifice of his Son guards his mercy with such an awful terror, as is sufficient to dishearten the most desperate sinner from presuming upon it. For he that dares presume to sin on upon a mercy that cost the blood of the Son of God, hath courage enough to outface the flames of hell, and is not capable of any mercy that the great God can indulge with safety to his own authority. For what mercy can be safe from that man's abuse and presumption that dares abuse a mercy so guarded and secured as this is, by being founded upon such a dreadful consideration.

And as a through persuasion of the necessity of Christ's sacrifice to the forgiveness of our sins will fill us with awful apprehensions of the divine severity, and set before us a most dismal prospect of the vast demerit of our sins, both which are necessary to engage us to a through reformation; so a through conviction of the necessity of his intercession to render our duties, our prayers, and persons acceptable to God, will effectually humble and abase us in our own eyes, which, as I shall shew you by and by, is highly conducive to a good beginning of this our Christian warfare. For next to banishing us from his presence for ever, the most effectual course God could take to abase us was to exclude us from all immediate intercourse with him, and not to admit of any more addresses or supplications from us, but only through the hands of a Mediator; which is a plain demonstration how infinitely pure he is, and how base and vile our sins have rendered us; insomuch that he will not suffer a sinful creature to come near him, otherwise than by a proxy; that he will not accept of a service from a guilty hand, nor

listen to a prayer from a sinful mouth, till it is first hallowed and presented to him by a pure and holy mediator. So that unless we are strangely inconsiderate, we cannot but be touched with a deep sense of our own vileness, when we think at what a distance the pure and holy God keeps us; how he stands off at the stench of our abominations; and notwithstanding all his benignity towards us, will neither hear us, nor have any thing to do with us, without the powerful intercession of his own Son.

And as our conviction of the necessity we have of Christ's sacrifice and intercession is very apt to affect us with holy sorrow and fear, both which are very powerful instruments of our reformation; so our persuasion of the reality and excellency of his mediation is no less apt to inspire us with a mighty hope and assurance of acceptance with God, if we reform and amend: for it seems that upon propitiatory sacrifices and interceding spirits guilty minds have been always inclined to place their confidence of acceptance with God. Hence it was a principle generally received by men of all nations and religions, (however it came to pass I know not,) that for sinful men to appease the incensed Divinity, it was necessary, first, that some life should be sacrificed to him by way of satisfaction for their sins; and that the nobler it was, the more propitious it rendered him. 1. That some high favourite of his should be prevailed with to intercede with him in their behalf. Whereupon, understanding by universal tradition that there were a sort of middle beings (whom they call demons, and we angels) between the sovereign God and men, they began to address to these, and to bribe them with sacred honours to interpose with God in

their behalf. And if they could make a shift to rely upon sacrifices, the most precious of which were the lives of sinful men; and to depend upon intercessors, of whose interest with God they had little or no security; what a mighty ground of confidence and assurance have we, for whom the Son of God once offered such a meritorious sacrifice upon earth, and continues to make such a powerful intercession in heaven! For besides that, as he was a spotless and innocent person, his sacrifice was wholly meritorious for guilty offenders; and besides that, as he was a person of infinite value and dignity, his sacrifice was meritorious for a world of guilty offenders; God, upon whose good pleasure the admission or refusal of it entirely depended, has openly declared his acceptation thereof as a propitiation for the sins of the world, and engaged himself by a public grant and charter of mercy, to indemnify, for the sake of it, every sinner in the world that will but return to him by a serious and hearty repentance; neither of which great things could ever be said of any other sacrifice. And in the virtue of this sacrifice, as well as his own personal interest with his Father, he now intercedes in our behalf; and pleading our cause, as he doth, with the price of our souls in his hand, even in his precious blood by which he redeemed them, we may be sure that, with that powerful oratory, he cannot fail of succeeding in our behalf. For having purchased for us, by his blood, all those favours which he intercedes for, he is invested with the right and power of bestowing them upon us. So that now, for our greater security, all those favours, which God hath promised us, are actually deposited in the hands of our Mediator: and though his bare

promise is in itself as great an assurance as can be given us; yet it is to be considered that guilty minds are naturally anxious and full of unreasonable jealousies, and consequently, whilst they looked upon God as their adverse party, and a party infinitely offended by them, would have been very prone to suspect the worst, had they had nothing but his bare word to depend on. And therefore, in condescension to this pitiable infirmity of his sinful creatures, he hath not only promised them his acceptance and favour upon condition of their return to him, but hath also put the performance of his promise into a third hand, even into the hand of a mediator, who, by the nature of his office, is equally concerned for both parties; as well that God should perform his promise, if we performed our duty; as that we should perform our duty, if we received the benefit of his promise. And hence, Heb. vii. 22. our Mediator is called the *Sponsor*, or surety of a better covenant. So that now we have no longer to do with God immediately as our adverse party, but by a mediator, who by his office is obliged to be on our side as well as God's, and to take care that neither receive the other's part of the covenant without performing his own. Thus as he hath been sometimes pleased in compliance with human weakness to enforce his promise with his oath; not that the one is in its own nature a greater security from God than the other, but because with men an oath is more obliging than a promise; so, in great condescension to the unreasonable diffidence of our guilty minds, he hath not only promised us pardon and acceptance upon our repentance, but he hath also given us a collateral security for the performance of it, even the security of

a mediator, in whose hands he hath deposited whatsoever he hath promised us. Not that in itself this is a greater security than his own bare word and promise, which he cannot falsify without renouncing his being; but because this way of giving security by a third person is more accommodate to the method of our covenants and agreements with one another, and consequently more apt to satisfy our anxious and diffident minds.

And thus the conviction of our need of a mediator, and the persuasion of the reality and excellency of his mediation, will powerfully work both on our hope and fear, which are the main springs of all our religious endeavours; and give us at once the most horrible prospect of the evil of sin, and the most comfortable assurance of pardon and acceptance with God upon our repentance and amendment; both which are absolutely necessary to our successful entrance into the Christian warfare.

IV. To our beginning of this holy warfare, it is also necessary that we should be affected with a deep sorrow and shame and remorse for our past iniquities: for this the apostle calls *sorrowing to repentance;* and tells us that *godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of,* 2 Cor. vii. 9, 10. and accordingly it is recorded of St. Peter's converts, that the beginning of their repentance was their being *pricked at the heart,* Acts ii. 37. and even repentance itself is in scripture called *a broken and contrite heart;* this being the most immediate preparation to a true repentance or change of mind, Psalm li. 17. And hence the ancient penitents are described in scripture as *girding themselves with sackcloth, and repenting in dust and*

ashes; in allusion to the ancient manner of great and solemn mournings, which was to put on sackcloth, cover the head with ashes, and sit in the dust. And in the primitive and purest ages of Christianity, it is evident, that the bitterest sorrows and remorses were looked upon as necessary preparations to repentance; for the penitents, in those days, as Tertullian and Nazianzen describe them, "lay prostrate at the church-doors in sackcloth and "ashes, supplicating the prayers of the presbyters "and widows, hanging on the garments and knees "of those that entered into the church, kissing "their footsteps, and with rivers of tears in their "eyes beseeching their prayers to God for their par-"don." Now though we are not under the severities of such an ecclesiastical discipline, yet we are equally obliged with those ancient penitents to exercise it internally in our hearts. For sin is as bad now as it was then, and as great an evil in us as it was in them; and therefore ought to be lamented by us with an equal sorrow and remorse. And indeed if we ever mean to wage war with it with success, it is necessary we should acquire beforehand a through sense and feeling of the evil of it; that we should chastise our souls with some degree of that bitter sorrow and regret it deserves, and inflict upon ourselves some part of that hell of infinite horror and anguish that is engendering in its womb; that so being the more sensible of its malignity, we may be the more enraged against it, and enter the lists with it with the greater resolution and animosity. For our sorrow and remorse for our sins, if it be serious and hearty, will convert into hatred and indignation against them, and that hatred will ani-

mate us in all our conflicts with them, and render us more obstinate against their terrors and allurements. So that when in the aftercourse of our warfare against them, we are tempted afresh to yield and comply with them, the remembrance of the past shame and sorrow, remorse and confusion, we have undergone for their sakes, will render us far more deaf and inexorable, than otherwise we should be to their solicitations.

If therefore we would engage in this spiritual warfare with success, we must be often reflecting upon our past sins, and representing them to ourselves in all their aggravating circumstances. And when we have surveyed them round about, and considered them in all their natural turpitude, disingenuity, and indecency, and applied them to ourselves in all their appendant stings, shameful effects, and dismal circumstances, so that our hearts begin to feel them, and to smart and bleed under the dolorous sense of them; then must we pour them out before God in sad and mournful confessions. For the very confession of our sins before so pure and great a Being is in itself an effectual means to increase our shame and sorrow for them; and he must have a very hard heart that can ingenuously, and without any reserve, lay open his crimes before the God of heaven and earth, in all their black aggravations, without being stung with a sensible regret and confusion; especially if he frequently repeat his confessions as he ought to do.

V. To our successful beginning of this our Christian warfare, it is also necessary that we earnestly implore the divine aid and assistance, to enable us to go through with it. For God, knowing how unable

we are of ourselves to engage in this great enterprise with that good conduct that is necessary to give us any probability of success, hath promised us his own presence and assistance even from the beginning to the end of it; and if in any part of it his assistance be necessary, it is doubtless in the entrance, which, as I shall shew you by and by, is by far the most difficult and hazardous. If therefore we presume to enter upon it without supplicating God to second us with his grace and assistance, we shall quickly find ourselves shamefully foiled and defeated. For though he hath promised to assist us, yet it is upon condition that we earnestly beg and seek him; he will *give his Spirit,* but it is *to those that ask it,* Luke xi. 13. he will *draw near unto us,* but first *we must draw near unto him,* James iv. 8. and we are assured, *that we shall have if we ask, that we shall find if we seek, and that it shall be opened to us if we knock,* Matt. vii. 7. And therefore we are bid to *go boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in the time of need,* Heb. iv. 16. and not only to *pray without ceasing,* 1 Thess. v. 17. but *in every thing by prayer and supplication to let our requests be made known unto God,* Phil. iv. 6. and if in every thing we ought to make known our wants to him, then much more in this great and difficult undertaking, in which it will be impossible for us to succeed without his heavenly aid and assistance.

Wherefore, as we hope for victory in this our spiritual warfare, we must earnestly implore his concurrence with us, and beseech him to second us in all our weak efforts and endeavours: we must lay open our woful case before him, and remonstrate to

him, that we are heartily willing to do what we are able, but that without him we are abundantly sensible all will be in vain. We must tell him that our dependance is upon him; and that all our hope of success is in him, and that we dare not stir one step without him; and beseech him, that he will not stand by, and see us spend ourselves in ineffectual strugglings; but that he will graciously stretch forth his helping hand to us, and not suffer us to miscarry for want of his necessary assistance. Which if we do, we may assure ourselves that the merciful God, who is the Father of our spirits, will never abandon his own offspring whilst it cries out to him, and with pitiful and bemoaning looks implores his aid and gracious cooperation.

Whilst therefore we are thus endeavouring to prepare ourselves for our spiritual warfare, we ought in every act of preparation to look up to God, and earnestly supplicate the concurrence of his grace and Spirit. While we are endeavouring to believe, we must beg him to help our unbelief, to remove all prejudices from our minds, and present the evidences of our religion to our understandings in a clear and convincing light. When we are setting ourselves to a serious consideration, we must beseech him to fix our thoughts, to suggest to and repeat his heavenly motives and arguments so fast and thick upon our minds, that no sinful or worldly thought may be able to crowd in to disturb or divert our meditations. When we are labouring to persuade ourselves of our need and the reality of our Saviour's mediation, we must earnestly entreat him to open our eyes, and convince us effectually of the horrible danger of our sin, and of the infallible efficacy of that blessed re-

medy. When we are attempting to affect ourselves with the bitter sense of our past transgressions, we must implore him to strike in with us, and to inspire our minds with such piercing and powerful convictions of the infinite shame, baseness, and danger of them, as may sting our brawny consciences to the quick, and dissolve our frozen souls into a sorrowful repentance; that so, when we enter the lists, and proceed to resolution, which is the beginning of our spiritual warfare, we may be armed against our sins with such a lively faith, such puissant considerations, such horror and animosity against them, and such an assured hope of being rescued from the fatal issues and effects of them, as that we may be able to promise ourselves a happy success in the ensuing course of our warfare against them. And having thus fitted and accoutred ourselves for this great and momentous enterprise,

VI. We are to enter into a serious and solemn resolution of amendment, of forsaking and renouncing all our sins, and never returning to them more, whatsoever temptations may invite, or difficulties encounter and oppose us. Which resolution is in scripture called μετάνοια, which we translate *repentance*, but in strictness signifies a *change of mind*, or of purpose and resolution; a renouncing our sinful purposes, and solemnly engaging ourselves in a contrary resolution of *living soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.* So that wheresoever the precept of repentance is expressed by this word, the meaning of it is to oblige us to change the wicked purposes of our hearts into a firm and serious resolution of forsaking all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and entirely resigning up ourselves to the will

and disposal of God. And hence it is that μετανοεῖν and ἐπιστρέφειν, i. e. to *change our minds*, and *convert* or *turn*, are in scripture so often put together; the one denoting the inward change of our resolution, the other the outward change of our practice pursuant to it. So Acts iii. 19. *Repent and be converted*, and Acts xxvi. 20. *that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance;* that is, that they should resolve to forsake their sins, and submit to their duty, and put their resolution into practice. And so that other word μεταμέλεια, which we also render *repentance*, strictly signifies *an after-care*, that is pursuant unto this μετάνοια, or *change of resolution*.

Now this repentance or change of resolution is the initial act of the religion of sinners, whereby they resume their inward man from the service of sin, and submit and resign their wills to God; whereby in heart and will they forsake the Devil's colours, and list themselves volunteers under the banner of Christ. And being so, it ought to be performed with so much the more care and preparation. For the beginning of all great enterprises is the ground and foundation of them; which if it be not firmly laid, will be apt to sink under the superstructures, and to endanger their ruin and downfall. Now all the foregoing duties being necessary preparations to a good resolution, we ought, before we resolve, to spend a considerable portion of time in the diligent practice of them, and not to resolve hand over head till we are duly and truly prepared for it; till by exercising our faith and consideration, &c. we have broken and tamed our perverse and obstinate wills, and throughly persuaded them to part with every sin, and to ap-

prove of and consent to every duty that is comprehended in a through resolution of amendment. And if when we are about to resolve, we find upon a strict examination any secret reserve or exception in our wills, if there be any lust which they are not throughly persuaded to part with, or any duty to which they are not fully reconciled, we ought for that time to forbear resolving, and to go on in the exercise of the preparatory duties, till we find our reluctant wills throughly conquered and persuaded by them. For if there be any leak left open in our resolution for any sin to creep in at, that will be sure to insinuate in the next storm of temptation; and if it should not let in other sins after it, as it is a thousand to one but it will, it will by its own single weight sink us into eternal perdition. Wherefore before ever we enter into the resolution of amendments, we ought to be very careful that our wills be throughly prepared for it; that they be reduced to a fair compliance with the matter we are resolving upon, and effectually dissuaded out of all resolution to the contrary; and when this is done, we may cheerfully proceed to the forming of our good resolution.

Which ought to be performed by us, between God and ourselves, with the greatest seriousness and solemnity. For now our hearts being ready, we are to betake ourselves to our knees, and in these or such like words to devote ourselves to God: "O thou "blessed Author of my being, I am now fully con- "vinced that I owe myself to thee by a thousand "ties and obligations, and am infinitely sorry and "ashamed that I have so long sequestered and with- "drawn myself from thee to serve my own base lusts "and affections. Wherefore now in thy dread pre-

" sence, and in that of thy holy angels, I here entirely
" resign up myself unto thee, and do resolve, without
" any reserve or exception, that whatsoever tempta-
" tions I may meet with for the future, I will never
" wilfully withdraw or alienate myself from thee
" more. From henceforth I heartily renounce all
" my sins, and particularly those that have been
" most dear and pleasant to me, and do faithfully
" promise to continue thy true and loyal subject as
" long as I breathe, and that whatsoever invitations
" I may have to the contrary, I will never revoke
" the resolution I now make, or any part of it. So
" help me, O my God."

And having thus solemnly resolved, it will be highly necessary that for the farther ratification of it, we should yet more solemnly repeat it in the holy sacrament; wherein, according to the custom of feasts upon sacrifices, God and every faithful communicant do mutually re-oblige themselves to one another, and upon the sacred symbols of the body and blood of Jesus do ratify to each other each other's part of that everlasting covenant, which by the federal rite of his meritorious death and sacrifice was inviolably sealed and confirmed. So that when we take those holy elements into our hands, which the priest in God's stead presents and offers to us, we do in effect make this solemn dedication of ourselves to God:
" Here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our-
" selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable,
" holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee; and here we
" call to witness his sacred blood that redeemed us,
" and those vocal wounds which do now intercede
" for us, that from henceforth we oblige ourselves
" never to start from thy service, what difficulties

"soever we may encounter in it, or what tempta-
"tions soever we may have to forsake it." And having thus resolved and confirmed our resolution by the body and blood of our Saviour, and taken the sacrament upon it, not to depart from what we have resolved, we have actually listed and engaged ourselves in a warfare against sin, the world, and the Devil, upon the final success whereof our everlasting fate depends. And thus you see what duty is implied in the beginning or entrance of this warfaring part of the life of a Christian.

SECT. II.

Wherein some motives are urged to persuade men to the practice of those duties that are proper to the beginning of the Christian warfare.

HAVING in the former section given a brief account of those duties which are necessary to the well beginning of our Christian warfare, I shall now, for a close of that argument, endeavour to press and persuade those who have not as yet begun, to enter immediately upon it, by putting in practice these initial duties of it. You who have been hitherto warring against God, and striving against your duty and your happiness, be at last persuaded to make a stand for a while, and to listen to the voice of reason and religion, which do both call aloud to you to face about, to desert the party wherein you are engaged, and come over to the side of virtue. And that I may, if possible, prevail, I do here earnestly beseech you, even by all that is dear and precious to you, by the love of God, and by the lives of your souls, and

by all your hopes of happiness in the world to come, seriously to consider with me these following motives.

1. That there is a vast necessity of beginning this our spiritual warfare one time or other.

2. That it is unspeakably most secure and advantageous for us to begin it now.

3. That the final success of it doth very much depend upon the well beginning of it.

4. That when once we have well begun it, the main difficulty of it is conquered.

I. Consider the vast necessity there is of beginning this spiritual warfare one time or other. For that which is necessary for us to accomplish at last, is necessary to be undertaken by us one time or other. Now it is as necessary for us to oppose and vanquish the temptations of the world, and the corruptions of our own nature, as it is not to go to hell, or not to miss of heaven. For in this great battle the everlasting fate of our souls is to be decided; and if we come off victors, we are made; if vanquished, we are undone to eternity. So that in this spiritual warfare we do not contend, like the warriors of this world, for a triumphal wreath that will wither upon our brows, or for fame and renown, which is nothing but the breath of a company of talking people, or for the enlarging of our empire over the next handful of a turf; but we are contending with enemies that are pursuing us to hell, and binding us in chains of everlasting darkness. We are to fight for our immortality, for all our hopes of happiness and well-being in a never-ending life: and when so much depends upon the success of our conflict, and we must conquer and be crowned, or die;

win the field and heaven, or yield ourselves captives to eternal misery; I leave you to judge, whether we are not obliged, under the vastest necessity, one time or other to begin. And if we must begin one time or other, why not now as well as hereafter? And to what purpose should we defer entering upon that work, which we all confess we must at last not only begin, but accomplish? For to have accomplished a necessary work, especially when it is difficult and important, is a great satisfaction to the mind: and whereas while it is yet to do, the prospect of the pain and labour of it creates in us a great deal of trouble and anxiety; when once it is done, or the main difficulty of it is over, every reflection on our past pains sweetens our present repose, and crowns it with joy and triumph. And thus it is in our entrance into the Christian life, which we all confess to be both necessary and difficult; and it being so, what do we else by our delaying it, but only prolong the pain and trouble of it? And whereas by one brave attempt we might ease ourselves, and set our souls at rest for ever; we languish away our life in misery, and are sick with the fear of our remedy. Just like poor men that are under the torment of the stone: they know they must be cut or die; but out of a frightful apprehension of their remedy, they put it off from time to time; they promise they will endure it, rather than lose their lives; but when they come to the trial, their hearts fail, and they must needs have a little longer respite; but all the while they endure not only the pain of their disease, but also the apprehensions of their cure, which at last they must also actually endure, or death, which is much more terrible to them. Whereas had they been cut

at first, they might have saved themselves all that torment, and fear of farther torment, which they endured in the time of their delay. And just thus it is with those who defer their repentance, which had they begun at first, when they fell into their sinful courses, their hearts might have been at ease a great while ago, and they might have saved themselves all those gripes and twinges of conscience, and all those painful apprehensions of the smart and difficulty of repenting at last, which they had been forced to endure in the several periods of their delay. But, alas! repentance is a sad remedy: well, be it never so sad, you know you must endure it, or that which is a thousand times worse. Why then you will endure it, that you are resolved upon, but fain you would have a little longer respite. Ah, foolish souls! why will you prolong your misery, and linger out your lives in torment, when, as by enduring now what you must endure at last, you might be presently at ease, not only from the pain of your past guilt, but from the fear of your future repentance.

II. Consider that it is unspeakably more secure and advantageous for us to begin our Christian warfare now: for this life is the only time of our trial and probation, the field in which our spiritual warfare is to be fought, and from which we must all go off triumphing conquerors or eternal slaves. And, alas! such a slippery and uncertain thing is this our present existence, that there is no one part of it we can call our own, but what is present. For all our futurity is in God's hand and disposal; and how he will shorten or prolong it we are not able to prognosticate. So that, for ought we know, the next moment may finally determine our everlasting fate; and

the hopes of eternity which are now in our hands may slip through our fingers before to-morrow morning, and leave us desperate for ever. What a dreadful venture therefore do those men run, that delay from time to time the securing their salvation by a timely repentance! When it is now in their own power, would they but lay hold on the present opportunity, to secure their victory and crown, they rather choose to go to cross or pile for them, and to stake them upon a contingency that is not in their power to dispose of.

But suppose they could secure that hereafter to themselves, to which they do so venturously defer their repentance, yet still there is another venture, of which they can never be secure; and that is, whether when that hereafter comes, God will not, out of a just resentment of their present despite to and contempt of his grace, withdraw it from them; which if he should, they would be left in as great an incapacity of repenting, as if he had withdrawn their lives from them; it being as possible for us to repent without life when we are dead, as without God's grace whilst we are living. So that promising that we will repent hereafter, we promise not only for ourselves, but for God too; we promise that he shall wait our leisure, and dance attendance after us through all the tedious stages of our delays and procrastinations; that he shall tamely put up all the affronts and provocations, which between this and our hereafter we are resolved to offer him, and in the end be as much at our beck, and as ready to come in to our assistance, when we shall think fit to call for him, as if we had never given him the least offence or provocation to the contrary. For unless

we can secure ourselves of this, it will be every whit as uncertain, whether we repent hereafter if we live, as whether we live to hereafter to repent. And what a madness is it for men, that have now their lives and souls in their own hands, to stake and venture them upon two such contingent issues, that are both of them so far out of their power and disposal!

But suppose there were no hazard in either of these, that we were as secure both of our own lives and God's grace as we are of the present moment, yet we can never hope to begin our Christian warfare so advantageously as now. For all the time we are deferring it our enemies are gathering strength, and mustering up their forces against us; our bad inclinations are ripening and improving, and our evil habits are growing more inveterate; and so many degrees of strength as these get, we lose; and so proportionably as their power to offend us increases, ours to defend ourselves against them decreases. What a madness therefore is it for men, who pretend to be resolved to engage in the Christian warfare, to defer it, as they do from time to time, when they cannot but be sensible, if they take any notice of themselves, how much every farther delay improves their lusts, and impairs their reason; how it fortifies their enemy, and weakens themselves. You say you are convinced of the necessity of this warfare, and resolved to undertake it one time or other, though as yet you cannot prevail with yourselves to enter upon it. And why not yet? Why, for some reason or other, forsooth, you find yourselves averse to it. And do you imagine that if you are averse to it to-day, you will be less averse to it to-morrow or next

day? No, fond men; do not abuse yourselves; for if you will not enter upon it now, be assured of this, you will never find yourselves either so willing to it, or so fit and able for it again, as long as you live. For your lusts will grow every day dearer and dearer to you, and so twine and wrap themselves by degrees about your hearts and affections, that you will every day find yourselves more and more unwilling to part with them; and at last they will cling so fast, that there will be no pulling them from ye, without pulling away your souls with them. Wherefore talk no more, I beseech you, of repenting hereafter, but resolve once for all that you will repent now or never.

III. Consider, the final success of this your spiritual warfare doth very much depend upon your well-beginning of it. By what hath been said, you plainly see there is an absolute necessity of beginning it one time or other, and that you can never begin it so securely and advantageously as now; but unless you begin it well now, that is, with a through preparation of heart, you were e'en as good sit still, and not begin at all: for when once you come to the trial, to encounter the oppositions of a corrupt nature, and contend with the difficulties of a holy life, you will then quickly find your sappy resolutions sink, and, like so many rotten banks, yield and give way at every springtide of temptation. But as the well laying the foundations of a house secures the superstructures against the violences of all future storms and foul weather, so the first settling of your resolution upon a firm and steadfast basis will be a mighty safeguard to it against all ensuing storms of temptation. That well-grounded faith and through

consideration which induced us to it, will go along with it, and guard it through the enemy's quarters with such invincible reasons, as no sinful motive will be able to disprove or cope with. That hearty shame and bitter sorrow and regret which we felt in the forming our resolution, will animate and render it more firm and inexorable against all the solicitations of sin for the future. Those fervent and earnest prayers which preceded and accompanied it, will not only engage us to take the more care and regard of it, but engage God also to contribute more aid and assistance to it in all its ensuing conflicts and encounters. And when in the framing of our resolution we have taken effectual care beforehand not to resolve upon any thing but what we have considered the difficulty of; or against any thing but what we have felt the shame and smart of; or upon any reason but what we have throughly pondered and do firmly believe; and together with all this have engaged by our earnest prayers the God of all grace to aid and assist us, we may with some assurance promise ourselves a blessed issue and success. For now we are forewarned of and forearmed against all that can happen to us in our spiritual warfare; now there is no difficulty can arise in our way which we did not foresee and provide against, when we first set forward to heaven. So that if from henceforth we do but take an honest care to watch the motions of our enemy, and to keep up our own hearts and courage, we cannot miss of a glorious victory, and after that an everlasting triumph.

But if we make a rash beginning, and resolve precipitantly, without observing the abovenamed

rules and directions, in all probability our hasty purposes will end in a leisurely repentance. So that unless we intend to take a great deal of pains in religion to no purpose, to weave a Penelope's web, and do and undo as long as we live, and only to dance round in an eternal circle of sinning and resolving against it, resolving and sinning again, without ever making a step forward, but still wheeling about to the same point; let us now at last resolve to begin in that prudent method which God hath prescribed us.

IV. Consider that when once we have begun it well, we have conquered the main difficulty of this our spiritual warfare. For though it be an easy matter to begin ill, to resolve against our sins in a sudden pet or transient heat of passion; yet it must be confessed, that to resolve well and wisely, that is, with that firm belief and through consideration of things, with that shame and sorrow, and those earnest cries to heaven for aid and assistance, which are necessary to the founding of a strong and lasting resolution, is not so easy a matter. For in all those preparatory exercises, we have a roving mind, a hard heart, and a perverse nature to contend with; and we shall find it a very hard matter to call in our wandering thoughts, and unite them together into a fixed and steady consideration of the evidences of the truth of religion, and of the duties and motives and difficulties of it. And whilst we are entertaining them with this unwonted argument, there are a thousand objects with which they are better acquainted that will be calling them away; so that without a great deal of violence to ourselves we shall never be able to keep them together so long, as

is necessary to the forming a firm assent to the truth, and the passing a true and impartial judgment upon the proposals of religion. And when we have fixed our thoughts into a serious consideration of the evidences of religion, we shall find that our lusts will object much more against them than our reason; that they will be casting mists before our eyes, and bribing and biassing our understanding the other way; and that thereupon it will be more difficult than we are aware, to convince ourselves throughly of the truth of a religion that is so diametrically opposite to our vicious inclinations. But when this is done, and we proceed to consider the duties of religion, and to balance the motives with the difficulties of them, in order to the obtaining of ourselves a full and free consent to them; here again we shall find ourselves at a mighty plunge. For though the motives to our duty are, at first view, infinitely greater and more considerable than the difficulties of it; though it be unspeakably more intolerable to lose the joys of heaven, and incur the pains of hell, than to endure the sharpest brunts of this spiritual warfare; yet these being present and sensible, have a more immediate access to us, and consequently are apter to move us than either of those motives which are both of them future and invisible. So that unless we do earnestly press and urge ourselves with those motives, and imprint them upon our minds in the most lively and real characters, we shall find ourselves overruled in despite of them, by these present and sensible difficulties that are before us. But when we have effectually convinced ourselves that those difficulties of our duty are much less considerable than the motives to them,

we shall find it a hard task to persuade our wills into a free and explicit consent to all the particulars of it. For now we shall find a strong aversation in our natures to sundry of those duties that call for our approbation, and there will be a mighty counterstriving between our reason and inclinations. Our darling lusts, those bosom orators within us, will now employ all their rhetoric to dissuade us from parting with them; they will clasp about our souls, like departing lovers, and use all their charms and allurements to hold us fast, and reconcile themselves to us; and under these circumstances, though we have all the reason in the world on our side, we shall find it will be no such easy matter effectually to dispose our wills to close with so many offensive duties, and part with so many beloved sins. But when this is done, which to be sure will cost us many a violent struggle and contention with ourselves, there are other difficulties to be mastered. For now we must reflect upon our past ill life, and expose it to our own eyes in all its natural horror, turpitude, and infamy, and never leave reproaching ourselves with the foulness and disingenuity, the madness and folly of it, till we find our hearts affected with shame and sorrow for, and indignation against it. And for us that have been so long used to coax and flatter ourselves, to paint and varnish our deformities, and crown our brows with forced and undeserved applauses; for us to condemn and upbraid ourselves, to strip our actions of all their artificial beauty, and set ourselves before our own eyes in all our naked, undisguised ugliness, and not look off till we have looked ourselves into shame and horror and hatred of ourselves, will be, at first espe-

cially, a very ungrateful employment; and yet it may be a good while, perhaps, before our hard and unmalleable hearts will yield to the impressions of godly sorrow and remorse. But when this difficulty is conquered, our work is not yet totally finished. For now we must come off from ourselves, and all our presumptuous dependences upon our own ability and power, and in a deep sense of our own most wretched weakness and impotency throw ourselves wholly upon God, and with earnest and importunate outcries implore his gracious aid and assistance. And let me tell ye, to men that have been all along inured to such glorious conceits of themselves, such mighty confidences in their own abilities; that have promised themselves from time to time, that at such and such a time they would repent and amend, as if without God's help it were in their power to repent when they pleased; for such men as these, I say, to come out of themselves and their own self-confidences, and wholly cast themselves upon a foreign help; so sensibly to feel, and ingenuously to own their own inability, as to fly to God and confess themselves lost and undone without him, is a much harder matter than we can well imagine, till we come to make the experiment. And yet this, all this must be done, before we can be well prepared to resolve upon the Christian warfare.

This I have the longer insisted on, because I would deal plainly with you, and shew you the worst of things. For whether you are told of it or no, you will find it, if ever you make the experiment, that all your good resolutions, without these preparations, will soon unravel in the execution; and that after you have resolved a thousand times over, you will

be just where you are, and not one step farther in religion. But for your encouragement know, that when with these necessary preparations you have solemnized your resolution, you have won the main and toughest victory in all your spiritual warfare; a victory by which you have pulled down your sin from its throne, and broken and disarrayed its power and forces; so that now you are upon the pursuit of a flying enemy, and if you do but diligently follow your blow, and pursue your brave resolution through all temptations to the contrary, and do not suffer your vanquished enemy to rally and reinforce himself against ye, you will sensibly perceive his strength decay; and those lusts which seemed at first invincible will languish away by degrees from weak to weaker, till at last they expire into the habits of their contrary virtues; and so proportionably those virtues, which through our vicious aversations to them seemed at first impossible, will grow on by degrees from possible to easy, and from easy to necessary; and then the sins will be more impossible to us than the virtues.

Now what a mighty encouragement is this to make a good beginning of the Christian warfare, that in so doing we are sure to conquer the main difficulty of it; that when we have broke through all those oppositions that lie in the way to a wise and good resolution, we are past the frontiers of religion, and having gotten over those steep alps at its entrance, shall be sure to find the religion round about a plain and easy campaign, in which the further we go the smoother it will be, and so smoother and smoother, till at last it will be all sweet and delightful, like the flowery walks of paradise. Let us

therefore be persuaded, without any farther delay, to enter immediately upon this our holy warfare, and by faith and consideration, &c. to lay the foundation of a religious resolution; that so when we are actually engaged against our spiritual enemies, we may be able to stand our ground against all temptations, and that having finally conquered and subdued them, we may receive that immortal crown, which God the righteous Judge hath laid up for the victorious.

And so I have done with the first part of our Christian warfare, viz. our entrance into it.

SECT. III.

Concerning the second part of the Christian warfare; with a particular account of the duties thereunto appertaining.

I SHALL now proceed to the second part of our Christian warfare, viz. the course and progress of it, which consists in holy living. For when once we have reduced our wills to a firm and well-grounded resolution of entering into this militant state, that which is next incumbent upon us is to pursue our resolution in the future course of our lives and actions; that is, to abstain from all sin, and endeavour to mortify our inclination to it, and to practise all the contrary graces and virtues, and endeavour to improve them to farther and farther degrees of perfection; or, as the scripture expresses it, to *cease to do evil*, and to *learn to do well;* to strive against sin, and to die to it, and to *grow in grace*, and *perfect holiness in the fear of God.* In this consists the course and progress of our Christian warfare. In order whereunto it is indispensably necessary

that we should still repeat the practice of those duties by which we were first prepared to enter into it: all those means by which our good resolution was produced being naturally conducive to maintain and support it. And therefore we find, that faith and consideration, &c. are not enjoined as temporary duties, that are only to be practised in the beginning of our warfare, but as means that will be always necessary for us throughout our whole progress to heaven. For so we are commanded not only to acquire a sincere faith or belief of the gospel, but to continue and be established in it, Coloss. i. 23. compared with chap. ii. 7. And so again, we are enjoined not only to admit the proposals of religion into our consideration, but to keep them there, Luke viii. 15. and suffer them *to dwell richly in us*, Coloss. iii. 16. and so for all those other preparatory duties. For that from a hearty conviction of our need of Christ, we should beg all mercies of God in his name, and for his sake, is a standing precept of Christan devotion, John xvi. 24. and so is also confession of our sins to God, 1 John i. 9. and prayer for his grace and assistance, Coloss. iv. 2. Nor is it only required that we should once repent, or change our bad resolution for a good one, but that we should also repeat and confirm our good resolution; that we should *stablish our hearts*, that is, keep our wills fixed and determined to all good intentions and purposes, James v. 8. and *stand fast in the Lord*, that is, adhere to the profession and practice of Christianity with a firm and constant resolution, Phil. iv. 1. For to proceed in our Christian warfare is constantly to live up to our good resolution, which will require a continued application of those means by which we

were first prepared and disposed to enter into it. Thus faith is no less necessary to enable us to perform, than it was to prepare us to make our good resolution; and still the more we believe our religion, the more we shall think ourselves concerned in its proposals, and consequently the more firmly we shall be resolved to close with and embrace them; and so still as our faith improves in degrees of certainty, our resolution will proportionably grow stronger and stronger. Again, if it were necessary to the birth of our resolution, that we should first duly weigh and consider the motives and the difficulties of the duties we were resolving on, then it will be no less necessary to the growth and improvement of it, that we should frequently consider over these motives and difficulties again, and balance them one against another. And at first especially, while our good resolution is yet in its infancy, it will be very necessary that we should every day, before we go abroad into the world, spend some portion of time in fore-thinking of the many temptations that do lie in wait for us, whether in our business or company, or necessary refreshments and diversions; and forearming ourselves against them with the motives and arguments of our religion; that so we may have our weapons ready whenever they shall assault us, and be always provided to resist them. Again, if it were necessary to the forming our resolution, that we should be convinced of the necessity and reality of our Saviour's mediation, then it will be no less necessary to the performance of it, that our hope and fear, which are the springs of our action, should still be excited by the glorious assurance of mercy, and horrid prospect of sin, which this conviction implies. Once more,

was it necessary to the well-making of our resolution, that we should affect ourselves beforehand with a hearty shame and sorrow for our past transgressions, then it will be no less necessary for the strengthening and confirming it, that we should ever and anon revive this our shame and grief, by reflecting on the filthiness of our past state, and the weakness and imperfection of our present, and by an ingenuous confession of both to the high and holy God; that so our shame and sorrow for our sins being digested into anger and displeasure, may sharpen our resolution, and animate it more and more against them. In short, if it be necessary to the founding of our resolution, that we should first earnestly implore the divine grace and assistance, then it will be no less necessary for the continuance of it, that for the same purpose we should continually apply ourselves to the throne of grace; that we should every morning commit ourselves to God's grace and protection, and never presume to venture among the snares of the world without him; that we shall count it as unsafe for us to go out of our chambers without being armed with God's aid, as it is to rush naked into a battle amongst swords and spears: in a word, that we should every morning and evening, at least, recommend ourselves to God, and beseech him to defend us against all those terrors and allurements, which either the Devil or our own lusts shall propose, to withdraw us from our good resolution. And if upon all these preparatory exercises of our faith, consideration, &c. it was at first necessary for us to enter into a solemn resolution, it will be no less necessary, that with the same continued preparations we should frequently iterate and renew it, especially at first,

till the strength of our bad inclinations is in some measure broken and abated. Now we should take care to go every day out of our chambers fresh armed, as men that expect an enemy at the threshold; and not to trust our weak souls among the temptations of the world, till we have first chained up our inclinations with new vows of fidelity. So that you see the duties of our entrance into the Christian warfare are not so peculiar to that state, but that they are also to be practised in the course and progress of it.

But then besides these, there are sundry others that are necessary to our successful progress therein; all which I shall reduce to these following heads:

1. That we take care to arm ourselves with patience and courage to undergo and encounter the trouble and difficulty of it.

2. That we propose to ourselves the most excellent examples.

3. That we apply ourselves to our spiritual guides for direction.

4. That we be very curious of our aims and intentions.

5. That we should possess our minds with a lively sense and awful apprehension of God's presence with and inspection over us.

6. That we frequently examine and review our own actions.

7. That we be very watchful and circumspect in the conduct and management of ourselves.

8. That we should betake ourselves to some honest calling, and behave ourselves diligently and industriously therein.

9. That we should endeavour after a cheerful frame of spirit.

10. That we should maintain in our minds a constant sense and expectation of heaven.

11. That we should live in the constant use of the external ordinances and institutions of our religion.

I. To the course and progress of our Christian warfare, it is necessary that we arm ourselves with patience and courage to undergo and encounter the troubles and difficulties of it. For so we are commanded to *be strong in the Lord*, Ephes. vi. 10. and *to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. ii. 1. that is, to fortify ourselves with the grace of God and the motives of religion, against all those hardships and oppositions which may rise up against us in our march to heaven; for we are assured beforehand, that *we have need of patience, that, after we have done the will of God, we may receive the promise*, Heb. x. 36. and therefore we are bid to *strengthen ourselves with all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness*, Coloss. i. 11. and *to run with patience the race that is set before us*, Heb. xii. 1.

For though it is certain, that when we have well and wisely resolved, the greatest difficulty of our spiritual warfare is over, yet it cannot be dissembled, that even when this is performed, and we proceed from hence to execution, there will, at first especially, arise such difficulties and oppositions in our way, as will sufficiently try our courage and patience. And though if when we were forming our resolution we considered the whole matter, we could not but foresee great difficulties in the execution of

it, and be very sensible what strong inclinations from within and temptations from without we were to struggle and contend with; yet, alas! the difficulties of all undertakings are usually much less in our foresight, than in our sense and experience of them. For while they are in our foresight we have only the notions and ideas of them to encounter, and these being not so stubborn as the things themselves, are much more easily conquered by us. So that when instead of our own easy and compliant notions we come to contend with the difficulties themselves, we very often find the face of things quite changed, and those difficulties which did so easily submit to our apprehensions, do many times make an obstinate resistance to our endeavours: and thus many times it is in the matter in hand. So that when we are forecasting the difficulties of religion in our minds, we must always allow for the distance of them, which usually lessens their appearance; and conclude with ourselves, that when we are actually engaged with them, we find them much more stiff and incompliant to our endeavours than they are now to our thoughts; and accordingly prepare and arm ourselves against them. For when from considering we proceed to encounter them, we must expect to find, that to discourse and execute are things of a widely different nature; and that those difficulties which we so easily vanquished in our thoughts and discourses will, when we are actually contending with them, put us to a much harder trial of our valour and constancy than we were aware of.

For if we would have nothing but our own bad inclinations and the ordinary temptations of the world to struggle with, yet even these we shall find

sufficient to exercise our utmost patience and constancy. For we must not expect that our bad inclinations, especially after they have been pampered and improved by a long and frequent repetition of forbidden enjoyments, will be presently subdued and mortified, when there are so many temptations all around us continually exciting and provoking them. No, you may be assured they will struggle for their lives before they give up the ghost; and if they are deeply radicated, will not be torn from their roots without a great deal of time and labour. So that unless you have a great stock of patience and courage to endure and outstand their tedious resistances to your pious endeavours, and to deny them those vicious satisfactions which they feed and live upon, till you have starved them out; you will quickly be weary of contending with them, and rather choose to yield them their desires, than be plagued with their restless importunities.

But then, besides these ordinary difficulties of denying your sinful desires and inclinations, it may be your lot to *take up the cross* too, and to follow your Saviour through a dark lane of sufferings and persecutions; and then you will need a world of patience and courage to undergo all that shame and reproach, loss and pain, fear and suffering, through which you must fight your way to heaven, if ever you come there. Since therefore this may happen to ye, and is not altogether unlikely, it concerns ye, as ye hope for heaven, to forearm and prepare yourselves against it. So that our Christian warfare exposing us, as it doth, to so many certain and probable difficulties, it is not without reason that the apostle exhorts us to be *steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in*

the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

II. To the course and progress of our Christian warfare, it is necessary that we propose to ourselves the most excellent examples: for experience tells us, that good example hath a stronger influence upon men than good precepts or counsels; and the reason is plain, because he that only gives others good advice or instructions, doth not give them that security that he believes himself, as he that seconds his counsel with his own example. For they who are instructed do in a great measure depend upon the judgment and authority of their teachers, and therefore must have a reasonable security that their teachers do believe themselves before they will be induced to believe and comply with what they are taught; and such a security is not to be fetched so much from their words as from their actions. But when by their examples they transcribe their own doctrines, it is visible they are in earnest, and that is a probable argument to their disciples that their doctrine is true. So that good example teaches with greater force and authority than good doctrine can do, because it more sensibly confirms what it teaches, and doth at the same time direct us what to do, and by a very popular argument prove that we ought to do it. Besides, when the matter which the teacher advises or enjoins is hard and difficult, he ought, for the encouragement of those whom he teaches, to give them a full assurance that it is practicable; which no argument will so effectually do as his own example. For when they see that he himself practises what he teaches, that is an ocular demonstration to them that it is practicable. So that

good example carries in it this strong encouragement to goodness, that there is nothing in it but what is possible, and that the greatest difficulties that attend it are such as may be conquered by diligence and sincere endeavour. And as it gives us the most sensible direction and encouragement to virtue, so it also represents it to us to the greatest advantage. And whereas precepts and discourses of virtue are only the pictures and artificial descriptions of it, a virtuous example is virtue animated and exposed to our view in all its living charms and attractions. And therefore by how much nature exceeds art, and the most accomplished beauties excel their statues and pictures, by so much is virtue in examples more amiable and attractive than in precepts and discourses. Since therefore in good examples we see virtue alive and in motion, exerting itself in the most comely actions and grateful gestures, this must much more effectually recommend and endear it to our minds and affections than the most pressing discourses or lively descriptions of it.

This therefore is one of those great means of holy living which the gospel hath prescribed us, viz. that we should propose to ourselves the best and most excellent examples; that *we should be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises,* Heb. vi. 12. and that we should be followers of the apostles, and leaders of the flock of Christ, *as they were of Christ himself,* 1 Cor. xi. 1. But because the examples of the best of men have a great many imperfections in them, and are very often intermixed either with excesses or defects, and tainted with superstition and enthusiasm, by reason whereof they frequently mislead those that tread too

close upon the heels of them; therefore we are more particularly directed to the example of the great Master of our religion; which, though it consists of an unspotted innocence and perfect virtue, yet is every way accommodated to the state and condition of human nature and conversation. For he conversed among men with a modest virtue, and such as was every way consistent with an ordinary course of life. His piety was even, and constant, and unblamable, but such as fairly complied with civil society and a secular conversation. It affected not high transports and raptures of devotion, but was such as was both fit and easy for mortals to imitate. His virtue consisted not in prodigious fastings, or sour and unpracticable abstractions from sense, but in a life of justice and temperance, of humility, and charity, and patience, and the like; that is, in such a life as is not only proper but possible for us to transcribe. So that in his glorious example he hath transmitted to us an imitable virtue; for he took care not to outrun the capacities of men in imitable expressions of sanctity and virtue, but, so far as he could innocently, complied with our weakness, and kept pace with our strength; that so he might entertain us all along with the comforts of his company, and the influence of a perpetual guide. And as that rule of faith which he hath propounded to us is fitted to our understandings, being very short, easy, and intelligible; so, as an excellent writer of our own hath observed, that copy of manners which he hath set before us, is not fitted with excellencies worthy, but also with compliances possible to be imitated by us.

And as his example is all imitable, so it is all

throughout substantially good. For it consisted in a modest piety, a simple and unaffected goodness. His devotions to God never affected the stage, nor did they ever evaporate in enthusiastic rants, or unaccountable raptures of passion; but were always secret and serious, calm and manly, animated with a seraphic fervour, and yet conducted with reason and sobriety. His government of himself was exact and regular, his affections were always fixed to their proper objects, and never exceeded the just limits of reason; and his appetites were always moderated by his understanding, and never transgressed the bounds of temperance and nature. His conversation among men was most innocent and candid, free and ingenuous; neither vain nor morose, haughty nor sordid, but equally poised between all extremes. He was just without partiality, humble without affectation, charitable and beneficent without noise or respect of persons. His zeal was wise, temperate, and substantial, such as did not spend itself in a furious contention for or opposition to things of an indifferent nature, but it quietly submitted to the customs of his country, and of the church in which he was born and educated; and all his invectives were against hypocrisy and immorality, which were the only things to which his noble and generous temper could never be reconciled. In a word, his whole religion was modest and serious, and affected rather to be seen than to be heard, and to be than to be seen. His heavenly-mindedness was such as rendered him neither too sour nor too talkative; and his patience was always equally distant from stupidity and effeminacy. For so when he endured that miserable death of the cross, he suffered like a man that was

sensible of pain, and yet very well knew how to undergo it as became him. For as, on the one hand, he did not breathe out his soul like an effeminate epicure, in whining complaints and wretched lamentations; so neither, on the other hand, did he give up the ghost like a flanting stoick in a huffing contempt of death, or an affected insensibility of pain and misery. But from the beginning to the end he acted his part in that bloody tragedy, as one that was neither insensible of torment, nor conquered by it. For the last words which he breathed, which were a hearty prayer for his murderers, manifested his soul to be calm and serene under all the agonies of his body. Thus is his great example entirely composed of those excellent virtues that are the proper graces and ornaments of human nature. Now though there be some actions of our Saviour's life which were never intended for our imitation, viz. such wherein he either exercised or proved and asserted his divine authority; yet whatsoever he did of precise morality, and in pursuance to his own laws, he designed and intended for our imitation. So that in all such matters, as his law is to be our map and rule, so his practice is to be our guide and president.

For this is the great end of our religion, to which God hath predestinated us, namely, to be *conformable to the image of his Son*, Rom. viii. 29. and in this consists our *putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ*, namely, in imitating his manners, and following the garb and fashion of his conversation; and accordingly our Saviour tells his disciples, John xiii. 15. *I have given you an example* (that is, of humility and charity) *that you should do as I have done to you;*

and it is one of his great commands, that we should *learn of him who was meek and lowly of heart*, with a promise that in so doing *we should find rest unto our souls*, Matt. xi. 29.

Wherefore if we would lead a holy life, pursuant to our holy resolution, we must set holy examples before our eyes, and especially that most holy one of our blessed Saviour. We must peruse the history of his sacred life, and diligently observe his carriage and demeanour in all those capacities and circumstances wherein he was placed, and closely apply it to all ourselves as a perfect pattern of action. Thus and thus did my Saviour, *Sic ille manus, sic ora*—so he demeaned himself when he was in my circumstances, after this manner he acted, and thus he suffered: and can I follow a more glorious example; nay, would it not be a burning shame for me not to imitate his manners whilst I profess myself his disciple? Think, O my soul, what would he have now done, if he were in thy condition, and had thy temptations before him. Would he have pawned his innocence for such a trifle, or prostituted himself to such a base, infamous action, to avoid such an inconsiderable inconvenience? No, doubtless he would not. And art thou not ashamed to comply with such a temptation, knowing with what indignation thy Saviour would have rejected it? If we would but thus inure ourselves to reflect upon our Saviour's example, and apply it to and compare it with our own actions, we cannot imagine with what a divine emulation it would inspire us; how it would animate our weaknesses, and shame our irregularities, and enamour our souls with true virtue and goodness.

III. To the course and progress of our Christian

warfare, it is also necessary that we should frequently apply ourselves for advice and direction to our spiritual guides: for it is to be considered, that men of a secular life and conversation are generally so engaged in the business and affairs of this world, that they very rarely acquire skill enough in religion to conduct themselves safely to heaven through all those difficulties and temptations that lie in their way. For before they can be capable to guide themselves safely, they must in all points of great moment be able to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and to make a difference between good and evil, which in many instances do border so near upon one another, that it requires much greater skill and knowledge than the generality of men are masters of, to discern the point and boundary that parts them. And supposing their understandings to be so well instructed as to be able to resolve them truly in all those doubtful cases wherein they are or may be concerned, yet still there is generally such a fault in their wills, as renders them incompetent judges for themselves; and that is, that through an excess of self-love they are prone to be partial in their own concerns; and consequently, unless the case be very plain, to vote that true that is most for their interest, and determine on that side they are most inclined to. For when a man's judgment is before in suspense, a very small weight of interest on the wrong side of the question usually turns the scale against the greater probability on the right. And whilst interest fees men's affections, and their affections bribe their judgments, it will be almost impossible for them to secure their innocence whilst they determine all cases of right and wrong at the

tribunal of their own reason. For when once they have determined falsely, (as many times to be sure they will,) besides the many single miscarriages in practice that will be consequent thereunto; by practising on upon their false determinations, they will entangle themselves in such evil customs and habits, as by that time they have discovered the error of their judgment, will render it very difficult for them to correct the error of their practice. And therefore, to secure ourselves in our innocence and duty, it is mighty necessary that in all doubtful cases we should appeal from ourselves to the judgment of others, who having no interest to bias them one way or the other, will be much more impartial, and therefore (if they have but equal understanding) more competent judges of our case than ourselves.

Upon both which accounts the Christian religion hath wisely separated an order of men from the world, to be the guides and conducts of souls, to oversee and direct the secular flock, who upon the abovementioned accounts cannot be supposed to be in all cases competent guides for themselves. For it was to this purpose that our Saviour before his ascension commissioned his disciples, Matt. xxviii. 18—20. *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.* And that he did not intend this merely for a temporary commission, which was to expire with the first bishops and propagators of the gospel, but designed to have it derived from their

hands to all the succeeding ages of Christianity, is evident, not only from the promise annexed to it, that *he would be with them to the end of the world*, which plainly shews that it was to continue in force till then; but also from hence, that they to whom this commission was immediately given did actually derive it to others, 2 Tim. i. 6. with a strict charge that these also should successively derive it to others, Tit. i. 5.

And as by this perpetual commission Christ hath established a succession of men to be the guides of souls to the end of the world, so he hath obliged all Christian people to attend to and respect them as such. For *he that heareth you*, saith he, *heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me*, Luke x. 16. And 1 Cor. iv. 1. the apostle enjoins all Christians *to account of these spiritual guides as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God;* so also, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. he earnestly beseeches them, as a matter of vast importance, *that they would know them which labour among them, and are over them in the Lord, and were to admonish them, and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake;* and Heb. xiii. 17. he gives this injunction, *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.*

There being therefore an order of men that are thus sanctified and set apart from the world, by the commission of our Saviour, to consult the various necessities of souls, and administer to them in all

their religious concerns; it would doubtless mightily contribute to their successful progress in the Christian warfare, if, in all their straits and difficulties, men would apply themselves to them for counsel and direction with such modesty and sincerity as they ought to do. For besides that they might reasonably expect a greater blessing upon their counsels than other men's, they being commissioned guides under the great Shepherd of souls, who, we must needs suppose, will more especially cooperate with the means of his own ordination; besides this, I say, they being persons that are wholly devoted to the study and ministries of religion, must needs be supposed, *cæteris paribus*, to have a farther insight into the cases of souls, into their dangers and refuges, diseases and remedies, and consequently to be better able to counsel and direct them, than men of a secular life and conversation. If therefore men would be but so kind to themselves, as to apply themselves, in all their spiritual exigences, to a holy, wise, and well-instructed guide; to uncover their sores, lay open their cases, and reveal the secrets of their souls to him, so far as it is necessary to enable him to make proper applications; it is not to be expressed what a vast advantage they might make of him. He would be instead of a good genius or tutelar angel to their souls, to suggest many a good thought to them, and feed their meditations with many an useful notion; to enable them to extract from the articles of their belief their just and proper inferences, and reduce them to practical principles; to rectify their wandering, and extricate them from their doubts; to comfort them in their sorrows, and quicken them in their indispositions; to warm their in-

differences, and moderate their zeal, so as that they may neither be becalmed by the one, nor overborne by the too violent gusts of the other; and, in a word, to direct them to the proper methods of mortifying their bad inclinations, and conducting their religion so as to render it more easy and delightful to them. These and a great many other good offices a wise and well-experienced guide would be able to do men, if they would but take him along with them in their journey to heaven, and modestly submit themselves to his conduct and direction. And in thus doing they would act not only with greater security to their innocence, but with greater satisfaction to their consciences; because then their actions would be warranted, not only by their private sentiments, which in many cases they will have just cause to suspect, but also by the better and more impartial judgment of an authorized guide. For if under his conduct they should happen in any doubtful instance to err from the way of truth or righteousness, they will have this satisfaction, that they have used the best means to prevent it, the means to which God himself hath remitted them, to whom alone they are accountable for their actions, and who, as they may well imagine, will very much compassionate such miscarriages as may follow upon their submission to his own appointments. But if, notwithstanding the great care that he hath taken of their souls, in appointing them pilots to steer them safely to heaven, they will embark without them, and presume so far upon their own skill, as to venture to their eternal port through all those rocks and quicksands that lie in their way, they must needs be in great danger of miscarrying; which if they do, they may thank them-

selves for it, and can expect no pity from God, whose careful provision for their eternal safety they have so ungratefully contemned and neglected.

IV. To our prosperous course and progress in the Christian warfare it is also necessary, that, as often as we can, we should actually intend and aim at God in the course of our lives and actions. For it is of mighty advantage to the conduct of a man's life to have his intentions united, and continually to act with one steady drift and aim. Because while he intends but one thing, he unites the whole vigour of his nature in the pursuit of it, and is continually driving at it with all the force and activity of his faculties. It is an Italian proverb, "From the man of "one business, good Lord, deliver me;" because, minding that only, he must needs be supposed to be more expert and sagacious in it, and consequently the more able to exceed and overreach another man who hath only minded it by the bye: but when a man acts with a multifarious intention, he must needs be distracted in his operations, and the force of his faculties being divided by the multiplicity of his aims, must needs be so weakened, that it will be impossible for him to pursue any one of them with vigour and activity. It is one of Pythagoras his maxims, Δεῖ καὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἕνα γίνεσθαι, A man ought to be one, i. e. so far as he is able, to fix all his aims upon one end, and unite them in one centre, and not to suffer himself to be tossed hither and thither by independent designs and intentions; because this will unavoidably distract him in his prosecutions, and so divide and weaken his principles of action, that he will be able to do nothing to any purpose. God therefore being the great object of religion, it is necessary,

in order to our progress therein, that we should, as much as in us lies, respect and aim at him in the whole course of our actions; that we should continually look up to him as to the directing star by which we are to steer our motions, and conduct our whole lives under a fixed intention to obey his will and imitate his nature.

And, indeed, unless we do this, we are not good men in the sense and judgment of religion. For religion, as such, is a rule of divine worship; and under this notion the Christian religion, in particular, enjoins all its duties, viz. of homage and worship, to God. For it requires us to *do all as unto God*, Col. iii. 23. and *to do all to the glory of God*, 1 Cor. x. 31. that is, to do all in obedience to him and imitation of him, from a sincere acknowledgment of the perfections of his nature, of his sovereign authority over us, and an immutable right to rule and command us. Not that an actual, explicit intention of obeying or imitating God is necessary to every good action; for our occasions of doing good being so infinite, and so often occurring in our secular affairs, and our minds being so incapable as they are of attending many things at once, it is impossible for us actually to intend obedience to God in every good thing we perform; but that in the general we should heartily intend it, is indispensably necessary to the consecrating our best actions, and adopting them into the family of religion. For that we must obey God is the fundamental law of religion, from whence all the particular commands and prohibitions of it do receive their force and obligation. So that unless we do what he commands with a general intention of mind to obey him, we do not act upon

a religious obligation, and consequently, though our actions should be materially good, yet are they not formally religious.

Now to the fixing and settling such a general intention in our minds, it is necessary that in the particular exercises of our religion we should, so far as we are able, actually intend and aim at God; that we should throw by all other ends, so far as we are able, and refer our actions directly and immediately to him; in a word, that we should formally devote and dedicate them to his blessed will and pleasure, so as to be able to say, This and this I do purely to please God, with a single intention of soul to resemble and please him, to transcribe his nature, and comply with his will. For which end we must take care, as oft as we can, to perform our religious actions in such a manner, as that no secular ends may interpose between God and our intentions; to be as private and as modest as we can in our religion, and not expose it any more than needs must to the eye of the world, lest applause and reputation should intrude themselves upon us, and carry away our intention from God. For thus our Saviour advises in the case of charity and prayer, Matt. vi. 1—7. That *we should not do our alms before men to be seen of them*, nor *sound a trumpet before them*, to make the street ring of our charity; nay, if possible, *that we should not let our left hand know what our right hand doeth;* but that our alms should be secret, and known only to God and ourselves; and that when we pray, we should not affect to make a pompous show of it, *in the synagogues and corners of the streets*, but *that we should enter into our closets and shut our door*, and in the most private manner

unbosom our souls to God; the sense of all which is, that we should endeavour, as far as in us lies, so to circumstantiate our charity and devotion, as not to give any opportunity to secular ends and aims to obtrude themselves upon us, to mingle with our pious intentions, and deflour the purity of them.

Not that I think it unlawful for a man to intend any thing but God in the discharge of his duty, or that our intention is bad, when it immediately respects any worldly end, such as pleasure, or profit, or honour, which are proposed by God himself as arguments to persuade men to their duty: and what hurt can it be for men to aim at that in the discharge of their duty, which God hath proposed to them as an encouragement to it? It is true, if worldly advantage be the only or chief end we aim at, our intention is naught, and so are all the actions thence proceeding; but if, together with that, we do heartily intend and aim to please God, and conform ourselves to his blessed will and nature, as to continue in the path of our duty to him, not only when we have no prospect of outward advantages to induce us to it, but when outward evils and inconveniencies lie in our way, we need not doubt but our intention is truly good and sincere, notwithstanding those immediate respects which it many times hath to secular ends and inducements. But yet it is certain, that the more it respects these, the more imperfect it is, and the more liable to be vanquished by outward temptations. For it is a plain sign that it is conscious of its own weakness, when it dares not stand alone, but is fain to call in to it the assistance of these worldly ends to support and defend it; and the less of worldly aim there is in our religious intention,

to be sure the more pure and simple it is, and the more of substantial piety there is in it; and though it may be truly sincere, notwithstanding its being compounded with secular aims and respects, yet the more of these there is in it, the weaker and more unstable it must necessarily be. For our mind being finite cannot possibly intend many things with equal strength and vigour as it can do one; and when its intention is dispersed among various objects, it must necessarily be more languid than when it is collected, united, and fixed upon one; and consequently, the more a man's intention respects the world, the less, in proportion, it must respect God; and so on the contrary. And then, the less a man respects God in his duty, and the more he respects the world, the more liable he will be to the temptations of worldly loss or advantage. For when those advantages which he so much respects lie on the opposite side to his duty, to be sure he will be so much the more inclined to desert it; and as often as fortune shifts sides, and carries with it the advantages of pleasure, profit, or honour, from virtue to vice, or from vice to virtue, he will still be ready to face about with it, and be always veering like a weather-cock to a contrary point upon every change of wind. Whereas when a man's intention purely respects God, it will be immoveably fixed among all the changes and alterations from without. For there is no outward change or *capricio* of fortune can hinder a man from pleasing God, whose love to us depends not upon our being poor or rich, pleased or pained, depressed or advanced, but upon our being truly virtuous and religious. And therefore, if our aim be

purely to please him, we shall be sure to continue so, which side soever fortune smiles upon.

Wherefore, to our successful progress in religion, it is highly necessary that, so far as in us lies, we should abstract and separate our religious intentions from all these worldly respects; and this must be done by looking frequently up to God, and actually referring and dedicating our actions to him; by shutting our eyes, when we are entering upon any duty, to all worldly considerations, and determining with ourselves, This I will do purely because it is godlike, or because God hath commanded it: whether I shall be commended or disgraced for it, whether I shall get or lose by it, I will not now regard; it is sufficient that it is good, and that God hath commanded it, and therefore for this reason only I will do it, without any other respect or consideration. By which means we shall by degrees so purify our intentions, and refine them from worldly aims, that we shall be able to act vigorously in religion, without any other respect but that of pleasing God, and conforming ourselves to his will and nature. And when once we can do thus, we are in a great forwardness in religion. For now the will of God hath got such an ascendant over ours, that as we can cheerfully obey him without external inducements, so we can freely contemn all inducements to the contrary, and, it being our great and chief aim to please and be like him, the things that are without us will have very little power to move us one way or the other. Because now our great aim is above them, and our eyes are so steadfastly fixed upon God, that we are not at leisure to regard them.

And our mind being thus indisposed to listen to the restless importunities of external goods and evils, our innocence is safe, and we may pass triumphantly through all their temptations. It is a noble saying of Epictetus, lib. ii. cap. 16. Οὐκ ἐστιν ἄλλως ἐκβαλεῖν λύπην, φόβον, ἐπιθυμίαν, &c. εἰ μὴ πρὸς μόνον τὸν Θεὸν ἀποβλέποντα, ἐκείνῳ μόνῳ προσπεπονθότα, τοῖς ἐκείνου προστάγμασι καθωσιωμένον, i. e. "There is no other way for a "man to eject sorrow, and fear, and lust from his "soul, but by looking up to God alone, and resign-"ing ourselves to him only, and devoting our lives "to the obedience of his commandments." And elsewhere he tells his scholars, that the main thing which he drove at was, Ἀποτελέσαι ὑμᾶς ἐλευθέρους, εὐδαιμονοῦντας, εἰς τὸν Θεὸν ἀφορῶντας, ἐν παντὶ μικρῷ καὶ μεγάλῳ, i. e. "To make them free and blessed, by persuading "them to look up to God in every thing, whether it "be small or great," lib. ii. cap. 19. For whilst in our religious intentions we do too much respect the things that are without us, we do in a great measure intrust them with our virtue and religion; and so far as we make them inducements to our duties, so far it is in their power to secure or betray it. As for instance, so much as I aim at profit in any religious action, so much power profit hath over my religion; and if the same profit should invite me to a wicked action, it will have as much power to betray my religion, as it had to secure it: for the same gain will have the same influence on me when it tempts me to sin, as it hath when it tempts me to obey. What a dangerous thing therefore is it for men to intrust such a treasure as their innocence and religion in such irresponsible hands, and to give those outward things which are the temptations of vice a

power to dispose of their virtue! What is this but to commit the keeping of our sheep to a wolf, or of our chastity to a goat! Wherefore, as we would be safe in our religious progress, it highly concerns us to purify our good intentions, so far as we are able, from all worldly respects, and to level them directly and immediately at God. And in order hereunto,

V. To render the course and progress of our Christian warfare successful, it is also necessary that we possess our minds with an awful apprehension of God's presence with and inspection over us. Among the many excellent rules which the heathen moralists have given for the conduct of men's lives, this is one, That in the whole course of their lives they should imagine some excellent person, for whom they have a great veneration, to be present with them, as a witness and spectator of all their actions. And it was wholesome advice that one gave his lewd friend, that he should hang the picture of his grave and serious father in the room where he was wont to celebrate his debauches; imagining that the severe eye of the good old man, though but in effigy, would give a check to the wanton sallies of the intemperate youth. And if the bare fiction of a man's being present with us, or his being present only in a dead picture, may be rationally supposed to have so strong an influence on our actions; of how much greater force must our firm belief and sense of God's presence with us be to regulate our lives and actions. And that he is thus present with us, we have sufficient reason to conclude, not only from the infinite plenitude of his essence, which, being self-existent, could not be bounded or limited by any cause from without, and therefore must necessarily be boundless

and immense; but also from express assertions of scripture, which assures us, *that his eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good,* Prov. xv. 3. *that he is a God at hand, and not a God afar off; and that no man can hide himself in secret places that he shall not see him; and that he fills heaven and earth,* Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. *and that we can go no whither from his presence,* Psalm cxxxix. 7, 8. *and that all things are naked and open to his eyes,* Heb. iv. 13. that is, that the world is surrounded and filled with his being, which is both the womb that contains and the soul that pervades the creation; and that being thus present with us wherever we are, he must needs be supposed to have a constant inspection over us, and a clear sense and perception of whatsoever we do.

And he being thus present with us in reality, and not in fiction or picture, it must doubtless be of mighty avail to the well-government of our lives, to be continually inspired with an actual and vigorous sense of it. And therefore our Saviour commands us to do good from a lively sense that God's eye is upon us, Matt. vi. 4, 6. *that our Father, who sees us in secret, shall reward us openly.* And this I conceive to be the meaning of that comprehensive precept which God gave to Abraham, *Walk before me, and be thou perfect,* Gen. xvii. 1. i. e. Behave thyself as one that art sensible thou art always in my presence, and under my eye; and in the sense of this, see thou beest upright and sincere, and that thou dost not vainly attempt to impose upon me by any demure shows or hypocritical pretences. And the same is implied in that of the apostle, Coloss. iii. 22. *Servants, obey in all things your masters according*

to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: i. e. Be not like those servants that do their duty for no other end but to ingratiate themselves with their masters, and accordingly do it no longer than while their master's eye is upon them; but do you it with all sincerity, out of an awful respect to God, considering that when man's eye is off, his eye is upon you. The sense of all which is, that after the example of holy David, Psalm xvi. 8. we should endeavour *to set the Lord always before us*, and to possess our minds with a quick and lively sense of his being continually present with us wheresoever we are and whatsoever we are about, and a constant witness and spectator of all our actions.

And this we shall find will be of unspeakable use to us in the whole course and progress of our Christian warfare. For,

1. It will mightily restrain us from all sinful actions: for as St. Austin observes, the greatest part of sin is taken away if a man hath but a witness of his conversation; and much more, if he be sensible that he hath such a witness as God, with whom he is infinitely more concerned than with all the world besides; who is the judge of all his actions, the rewarder of virtue, and punisher of vice, the eternal source of all those evils or goods that he can fear or hope for. And who but a man that is desperately wicked dares do an evil action in the presence and sight of such a formidable witness? For suppose you beheld this almighty Being sitting upon a cloud in some visible form, with a thunderbolt in his hand; and from thence looking down upon you, curiously observing how you demean yourselves, and closely

pursuing you with his awful eye through all your dark retreats and privacies; would not the thought of any action that is displeasing to him be ready to strike you into trembling and horror? Could you imagine yourselves to be any where secure in your wickedness, while you saw yourselves uncovered to his all-seeing eyes, to which your closets lie as open as your halls, and your hearts as the highways? Doubtless you could not. Why now the lively belief and apprehension of a thing is equivalent to a sensible perception. If I were throughly assured that the king were listening behind the curtain, and heard every word that is spoken in the room, I should doubtless be as much afraid of talking treason against him, though I saw him not, as if he stood just before me. And so though God be with me in an invisible manner, and I am not able to see him through that thick curtain of matter which is drawn between me and his spiritual essence, yet if I firmly believe that he is behind it, and am constantly aware that he is listening to what I say, and prying into what I do, that he keeps intelligence with my thoughts, and is intimately acquainted with all my designs and intentions, it will render me as cautious of my thoughts, and words, and actions, as if I saw him standing by me in a visible shekinah, or glory, to record every passage of my life, and enter into his debt-books every item of my guilt, against the great day of accounts. But how much the want of such a due apprehension of God's presence with us lets men loose to all wickedness may be collected from that of the prophet, Ezek. ix. 9. *The iniquity of the house of Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness.* And how

comes this to pass? Why, *They say, The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not;* whereas, on the contrary, David attributes his *keeping God's precepts and testimonies* to the lively sense he had, that his ways were always *before* God, i. e. lay open to his sight and inspection, Psalm cxix. 161. But then,

2. Such a lively sense of God's presence with and inspection over us will be of mighty use to keep us sincere and upright in the whole course of our actions. For, alas! to what purpose should we dissemble and conceal our wickedness from the eye of the world, so long as we lie open to the eye of God? Would you not think it very strange to see a company of prisoners, that within a few hours are to be tried for their lives, solicitously concerning themselves how to appear lovely and innocent to one another, hiding their deformities, and disguising their crimes with artificial pretexts and apologies, that so they may cheat and juggle one another into a mutual good opinion of themselves; but in the mean time take no notice of their judge, who sits before them upon the bench, observing all their tricks and impostures, and holds their lives in his hands, being commissionated to discharge or condemn them, according as he finds them innocent or guilty? And yet just thus do those men act, whose religion is nothing but a vain ostentation and ambition of popular applause: they screw their looks, study their actions, force their inclinations, and all to compose themselves into an outward semblance of religion; they employ a world of care and art to disguise themselves, and with the colours of sanctity to varnish their unhallowed natures, they openly deny them-

selves their dearest pleasures, and in the view of the world are many times forced to act against the grain of their strongest inclinations: and all this to mask their depraved tempers, that they may appear what they are not in the view of the world, and juggle themselves into a saint-like reputation. But whilst they are thus industriously courting the good opinion of their fellow-prisoners, their all-seeing Judge, upon whose final sentence their everlasting fate depends, is present with them; and, though they take no more notice of him than if he were a cipher in the world, is perfectly conscious to all their artifice, and sees through all their hypocritical disguises, and will ere long unmask and expose them to the view and scorn of all the world. And this considered, what a ridiculous folly is hypocrisy, that hides us only from those that have little or nothing to do with us, but leaves us bare and naked to his eye with whom we are most concerned. Alas! what a poor project is it to take so much pains as we do to recommend ourselves to men, to men that must stand at the same tribunal, and undergo the same judgment with ourselves! For what will their good opinion avail us, if the Judge disapprove us, in whose hands our lives and souls are? If he think well of us, we are safe, though all the world should condemn us; but if he condemn us, though every creature should acquit, they cannot rescue us from his sentence. But, alas! how differently soever God and men may think of us now, yet when he comes to discover his thoughts of us, in his public judgment and sentence, all the world will be of his mind; and if we stand right in his opinion, we shall be applauded by the whole universe, howsoever we

may be vilified now; as on the contrary, if he condemn us, we shall be sure to be hissed at throughout all the congregation of spirits, how gloriously soever we may be thought of at present. And by how much the better we are esteemed of now, by so much the more we shall be hissed at then, when the cheat is discovered, and the hypocritical visor is plucked from our devils' faces.

This if men duly considered, and fixed it in their minds, would effectually cure them of all their hypocrisy. For, alas! what hypocrisy can so cunningly disguise them, as to conceal them from omniscience? If men will be wicked therefore, they were e'en as good put on a bold face, and be wicked openly; for it is to very little purpose for them to sneak into corners, unless they could find one dark enough to conceal them from God, and cover them from his all-seeing eye: for why should that man be ashamed or afraid to let a boy or neighbour be conscious to his wickedness, that never scruples to commit it in the open view of the dreadful majesty of heaven, by whose final sentence his everlasting fate must be decided?

And so, on the other hand, to what purpose should we study to be more devout and temperate, sober and charitable, in the view of the world, than we are in our retirements, when we have no other eye but God's upon us? That which we are mainly concerned in is to approve ourselves to him; and if we can do this, what great matter is it, though our closet be all our stage, and heaven our only spectator? God hears the softest whispers of our souls, and sees through all our honest intentions; and our most secret virtues are as legible to his eye, as if they

were written on our foreheads with a sunbeam. We need no trumpet to proclaim our alms in his ears, for he knows by whom such a poor man was relieved, such a starving family succoured, though we should not superscribe our names upon our charity, nor *let our left hand know what our right hand hath done.* And if by the sincere discharge of our duty we have approved ourselves to God, what need we concern ourselves any farther? since it is not from men, but from God, that we expect the recompense of our obedience. No, doubtless, did we but live under the constant sense of God's presence with and inspection over us, we should regard him much more in every good action, and the good opinion of the world much less than we do; and the more secret our good deeds were, the more we should rejoice in them, because they would give us a stronger testimony of our simplicity and sincerity. For what should move us to be good, when God only sees us, but pure respect to his authority, and an honest intention of obeying him? And if obedience be our design, the more private our good deeds are, the more pleasure they will afford us, because those good deeds have most of obedience in them that have least of the theatre.

VI. To prosper our course and progress in the Christian warfare, it is also necessary that we should frequently examine and review our own actions; for this our religion enjoins as a necessary part of the militant life of a Christian. So 2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves;* and particularly it is enjoined as a proper preparation to the sacrament, *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat,* 1 Cor. xi. 28. So also Gal. vi. 4. *Let a man prove, or examine, his*

own work; where the Greek word δοκιμάζειν, which in all these texts we render to *prove* or *examine*, hath two significations. First, to call ourselves to account, to try our past actions by the rule, whether they be good or evil; secondly, to take such a due care of our actions, as that upon a strict trial of them we may be able to approve them to God and our own consciences. In the first of which senses the New Testament doth most commonly understand it; namely, to call ourselves to account, and make a strict survey of our actions, and pass an impartial judgment upon them, whether they are good or evil, and accordingly, 1 Cor. xi. 31. instead of δοκιμαζέτω, in verse 28. i. e. *Let a man examine himself*, the apostle uses, as a synonymous phrase, διεκρίνομεν, i. e. if we *judge ourselves*, if we summon our past actions before the tribunal of our consciences, and try and examine them by the rule, whether they are good or evil, and according as we find them, to approve or condemn ourselves for them.

And this is a duty of great necessity to the successful prosecution of our Christian warfare: for unless we do frequently reflect upon ourselves, and take a strict account of our past actions and behaviour, we shall incur a thousand errors and immoralities in the hurry of our secular occasions, without taking any notice of them; and those sins which we heedlessly commit, and never think of afterwards, though at first perhaps they may have little or no malice in them, do yet leave a malicious infusion behind them, and infect the will with bad inclinations, and insensibly dispose it to wilful and deliberate sins. For the pleasure of one bad action will be still inviting us to another, and that to a third, and so we shall be in-

considerately tolled on from sin to sin in the course of a heedless and unreflecting life, till, before ever we are aware, our inclination to the sin which we have so heedlessly repeated becomes too strong for our pious resolution. For when we have carelessly permitted one sin to break through our fence, that will open a gap for another to follow; and if this be not presently stopped by repentance, it will make the breach yet wider for others, and those again for others, till at last they have quite trodden down our good resolution, and make a throughfare in our wills for a custom of sinning. But if we frequently reflect upon and examine ourselves, it is impossible our faults should long escape our discovery, and we shall be sure to see them time enough to correct and amend them, before they are too deeply rooted in our natures, and have wound themselves too far into our inclinations: and a wound in our innocence, as well as our bodies, may be easily cured, if it be taken in time; but if it be neglected too long, it will rankle by degrees into an incurable gangrene.

And as frequent self-examination is a great bridle to our sin, so it is also an effectual spur to our virtue. For as when a man reflects upon his sins and miscarriages, and considers how and where he hath done amiss, his conscience will be presently urging and exciting him to repentance and amendment; so when he reflects upon his own virtue and sincerity, his conscience will smile upon and crown him with applauses, and give him such a sweet and grateful relish of his own actions, as will mightily encourage him to persevere in well-doing. For in all our self-examinations we taste this difference between good and evil, the sweetness of that and the bitterness of

this, and consequently the oftener we do so, the more we shall be sure to like and approve of the one, and to dislike and nauseate the other.

Wherefore to secure a good success to this our Christian warfare, as it is necessary, especially at first, that we should every morning before we go into the world repeat and enforce our good resolution; so it is no less requisite, especially till we have made some considerable progress, that we should every night, when we are withdrawn from the world, strictly examine the performances of the day, whether they are such as do comport with our solemn engagements. And if upon an impartial survey it appear that they do, though as yet it be but weakly and imperfectly, let us attend to the sense of our own minds, to that silent melody that resounds from our consciences to our actions, and so lie down in peace, blessing and adoring that grace by which we have been assisted and preserved. Or if it appear that we have been unwarily faulty, for want of due care and watchfulness, let us resolve to take more care for the future, and thereby to put a timely stop to our sin, before it hath too far insinuated into our will and inclinations; but if we are conscious of any wilful breach upon our morning vows of obedience, let us lament and bewail it with shame and indignation. What have I done, O wretched traitor that I am to God and my own soul! I have falsified my vows to Heaven, and broke those sacred bands by which I was tied up from my lusts and my ruin. What can I plead for myself, base and unworthy that I am? With what face can I go into his dreadful presence, whom I have so often mocked with my treacherous promises of amendment? Yet go I will,

though I am all ashamed and confounded, and confess and bewail mine iniquity before him.

If we would but take care thus to call ourselves to account every night, and impartially to censure the actions of the day, it is not to be imagined how fast it would set us forward in our Christian warfare; how much the reflection on a well-spent day would cheer and enliven us; how the grateful sense of it would spirit our faculties, and encourage us to go on against all oppositions; how much the review of the day would contribute to make our reason more vigilant, and our consciences more tender for the future; how much the pleasure of our sins would be allayed and abated, by the stinging reflections we should make upon them, and how much the dread of having the same reflections repeated to us at night would secure us against the temptations of the day.

VII. To prosper the course of our Christian warfare, it is also necessary that we should be very watchful and circumspect: for this also is one of those militant duties which the gospel enjoins us. Thus Matt. xxvi. 41. *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation*, and Mark xiii. 37. *What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch;* so also, 1 Cor. xvi. 13. *Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit yourselves like men;* and 1 Thess. v. 6. *Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober;* where the nature of the duty is plainly discovered by its opposite or contrary, *Let us not sleep, but watch;* i. e. Do not behave yourselves like men that are asleep, that take no notice or regard of what is done by, to, or about them; but be sure you exercise a faithful, prudent, and constant care

over your own actions, and those manifold temptations that assault and surround you. And therefore elsewhere it is expressed by *walking circumspectly*, Eph. v. 15. i. e. looking round about you, weighing the nature and circumstances of your actions, and using all honest care, either to prevent the temptations that threaten you, or to provide against them: so that in short the sense of this duty is this, that we carefully avoid acting rashly and precipitantly, without considering beforehand the nature of our action, whether it be good or evil; that in all doubtful and suspicious cases we impartially consult our rule and conscience, and look before we leap, and take care to satisfy ourselves of the goodness of our designs, before we put them into execution: in a word, that we do not carelessly run ourselves into temptations, but, if possible, to avoid them; if not, to be sure to arm ourselves against them, and keep as far off from all sin, especially from that we are most inclined to, as is consistent with our necessary occasions: or, in fewer words, it is to be always well advised in what we do, whether it be good or evil; and if it be evil, to remove, so far as we can, from all occasions that lead to it, and provide ourselves with considerations against it, and to keep them always awake in our minds, that we may not be surprised by it unawares.

Which is a duty indispensably necessary for us in the whole course of our Christian warfare. For whilst we accustom ourselves to act rashly and inconsiderately, without bethinking beforehand what we say or do, we wander like blind men in a field that is full of pits and quagmires, and are every moment in danger of stumbling into one mischief or

other, and shall certainly plunge ourselves in many an evil custom, before ever we have bethought ourselves of the evil of it; and so, instead of conquering our old sins, we shall be ever and anon running ourselves into new ones; and while we are running away from one evil, shall many times stumble into another, and to avoid the defects of virtue, leap headlong into the excesses of it. For in most moral actions, the transition from the utmost of what is lawful into the nearmost of what is sinful is indiscernible; and that line which parts this virtue from that neighbouring vice is generally so small, that it is hard to distinguish where they are separated, and to fix the just boundary whitherto we may go, and no farther. But then, considering that almost every virtue lies in the middle between two sinful extremes, neither of which are separated from it by any plain or visible landmark; how is it possible for us, without great care of our steps, to keep on steadfastly in the right path, when there are so many wrong ones bordering upon it? For when we perceive we have wandered too far towards either extreme, and are endeavouring to retrieve ourselves, if we do not take great care of our steps, we shall be apt to wander as far the other way, and so stumble out of one extreme into another. For he who lives heedlessly and incuriously, regards not how near he approaches to any sin, provided he doth but keep himself out of it; and when once a man takes the liberty to go as near to any sin as he thinks he lawfully may, it is a thousand to one but he will be transported by his inclination a great deal further than he should. So true is that of Clem. Alex. Pædag. lib. ii. cap. 1. Ταχὺ γὰρ καταπίπτουσιν ἐπὶ τὸ δρᾶν

τὸ μὴ ἐξὸν, οἱ πάντα δρῶντες ἃ ἐξὸν, i. e. They who will do all things that are lawful will quickly be induced to do what is unlawful; especially if they be strongly inclined to it; because the very nearness of what a man loves doth always render it more tempting and alluring to him. Thus he that hath a strong inclination to lying can never be safe so long as he allows himself to be excessive talkative; he that is vehemently propense to fleshly lust must needs endanger his innocence, if he come too near the farthermost limits of a modest freedom; and he whose nature is prone to malice and revenge cannot but run a mighty hazard, if he indulge to himself the utmost degree of a just and lawful resentment: for bad inclinations are never so impatient of restraint, as when they are within prospect of their proper satisfactions, and the objects which attract them are near and easy to be enjoyed. Upon which account it must needs be a very dangerous thing for such as are engaged in the Christian warfare, to live within sight of the temptations they are most inclined to; because the nearer they are to them, the more they will court and importune them; and while a man comes near a beloved lust, and doth not enjoy it, he doth but tantalize himself, and enrage his appetite after those vicious satisfactions, whose alluring relishes he had almost forgotten. If therefore he would obtain a perfect victory over his lust, he must not only forbear to act, but also to approach it; at least till he hath so far weaned his inclination from it, as that its nearness ceases to be a temptation to him. For inclination, like all other motion, is always swiftest when it is nearest its centre, and when once it is within the reach and attraction of

it, it hurries towards it with fury and impatience; and if in this its violent rage it happen to break out to its beloved sin, and to taste the forbidden pleasure of it, it will thereby immediately recover all its impaired strength, and become as headstrong and outrageous as ever; and so all that ground which we get in a month's abstinence from our sin, we shall lose in a moment's enjoyment of it. Upon this account therefore it highly concerns us, if we would succeed in our Christian warfare, to be very watchful and circumspect, to look well to our steps, and not approach too near to any sin, but especially to any that we are strongly inclined to.

VIII. To give us good success in this our Christian warfare, it is also necessary that we be diligent and industrious in our particular callings. This is one of those instrumental duties which our religion prescribes throughout the whole course and progress of our Christian warfare. Thus 1 Thess. iv. 10, 11. *We beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;* and this, 2 Thess. iii. 10. he backs with another, that *if any would not work, they should not eat,* i. e. That they should not be maintained in their sloth and idleness, and, like drones, be permitted to dwell at ease in the hive, and devour the labours of the more industrious bees; and this, verse 11. he calls *walking disorderly;* and verse 8. and 9. he tells us, that it was for this cause that he rather chose to work with his own hands for his livelihood, than to be maintained by them, as he might justly have demanded; that he might make himself an example of diligence for

them to follow. So also, Eph. iv. 28. ***Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good,*** i. e. employing himself in some honest calling, ***that he may have to give to him that needs:*** the sense of all which is to oblige us to engage ourselves in some honest calling or employment, and to be diligent and industrious in it.

And how necessary this is to secure us in the whole course and progress of our religion appears from hence, that we are naturally a sort of very active beings, that must be employed one way or other; that we have a mind within us that will be always in motion; that being a spiritual subsistence, and as such, of a quite different nature from dull and sluggish matter, will never admit of rest and inactivity; that derives all its pleasures from action, and hath nothing to live upon but the grateful relish of its own motion. And this being the state of that active principle within us that constitutes us men, we had need take great care to keep it honestly busied and employed. For it being naturally such an exceeding busy thing, it will be sure to find something or other to work upon; and if it be not constantly employed about honest and lawful things, it will quickly divert the current of its motion another way, and exert its activity upon dishonest and unlawful ones. And hence it is, that, since the apostasy of human nature, God hath placed the generality of men in such circumstances, wherein some honest calling, and their diligence and industry therein, is indispensably necessary to their comfortable subsistence. For he wisely considered that such was the indisposition of our degenerate natures, to

the divine and spiritual exercises of religion, that it would be impossible for us, in this imperfect state, to keep our minds always intent upon them, to fix our thoughts continually upon him, and exert our powers without any pause or interruption, in perpetual acts of love, adoration, and imitation of him; that there is such a repugnance in our tempers to these blessed operations, that, if we had nothing else to do, they would soon grow irksome and intolerable to us; and therefore, lest, being quite tired out with these spiritual acts of religion, we should hate them, and so turn the current of our activity into the contrary channel, he hath placed us in such circumstances, wherein we have frequent opportunities to rest our wearied minds from these abstracted exercises in such innocent employments, as are necessary to our comfortable subsistence in this world. So that by putting us under the necessity of employing ourselves in secular trades and callings, he hath taken care to intercept our minds, that they may not fly off from the pure acts of religion into the contrary impieties; and that when they are not divinely, they may be innocently employed; and by diverting our activity with honest, when it is weary of spiritual exercise, he hath taken a wise course to confine and bound it, and leave it less scope and liberty to rove and make incursions into sinful and prohibited actions. And therefore, as Aristotle commends Archytus for his invention of rattles, because children, by playing with them, are kept from breaking vessels of use; so ought we to admire the wisdom and goodness of God, for thus necessitating us to exert our activity in secular arts and trades, because by thus innocently employing our corrupt and

busy natures, he hath taken an admirable course to divert us from mischievous actions.

And he having thus obliged us, by our necessities, to follow some honest calling for a comfortable livelihood, he expects that we should be diligent and industrious in that particular calling wherein his providence hath placed us: for otherwise he loses his end; which was to restrain us from being sinfully active, by necessitating us to be innocently so. And now that by putting us into those necessities, by which we are put upon furnishing one another with those several conveniencies of life, for the supply of which our respective trades and callings are intended, we, by being diligent therein, approve ourselves faithful servants in the great family of God, and by industriously discharging those particular offices wherein he hath placed us, we act as dutiful ministers of his providence towards one another: because by so doing we supply those wants and necessities which God hath made, and which he hath made to be supplied by our office and ministries; so that now to mind our own business is a part of our religion, and it is that particular part to which God's providence hath called us. If therefore we are idle and neglective in this, we are undutiful servants to the common Master of the world, how officious soever we may be in other matters: for this is the proper work of our office; and therefore, if we are unfaithful in this, we can be faithful in nothing. Should the bailiff of a family neglect letting his master's lands and gathering in his rents, he would be thought a bad servant, how diligent soever he might be in the kitchen or the stables: and so, if we are remiss in our particular offices and employments,

we are bad servants to God, how sedulous soever we may be, either in the offices of other men, or in the common services which we all owe him: and he that neglects his own calling to serve God in his closet or in the church is like an unfaithful steward, that neglects providing for the family, to dress the garden and water the flowers.

It is true, as we ought not to devote to the common service of God that time and attendance which, by the rules of prudence and good husbandry, are appropriated to our particular callings; so neither ought we to permit our particular calling so to engross our time and attendance, as to leave none for our prayers and those common services, whether private or public, which, as creatures and Christians, we are obliged to render to our Creator: for as he that to serve God neglects his calling is a religious truant; so he that to attend his calling neglects to serve God, is a profane drudge: but, for a truly pious and industrious man, it is not at all difficult so to keep his business and his religion apart, as that they may not interfere with one another; and faithfully to discharge whatsoever his calling exacts of him, and yet leave void spaces enough in his time to do all that his religion requires.

Neither are we obliged to be so industrious in our calling as to deny ourselves any moderate refreshments or recreations, which are not only useful, but sometimes necessary to breathe our spirits after they have been almost stifled in a crowd of business, and divert our wearied thoughts, which, like the strings of a lute, by being slackened now and then, will sound the sweeter when they are wound up again. But then we ought to take care that we do not turn

our physic into food, and make that our business which should be only our diversion; that our recreations be short, and apt to refresh, but not to steal away our minds from severer employments. For long sports and recreations are like a large entry to a little house, they take up so much room in the narrow compass of our time, that there is not space enough left in it for the more useful apartments; and so far as our sports do exceed the measures of necessary and convenient recreation, they are unwarrantable encroachments upon our calling and religion. It is true, as for the measures of convenience, they are not alike to all: for as for those whose large fortunes have placed them beyond the necessities of the world, they may conveniently allow themselves larger portions of recreation than those of meaner circumstances, who, having not yet made a competent provision for their families, are obliged in justice to a more constant industry, lest they fall under St. Paul's censure of being worse than infidels. But how plentiful soever our outward condition may be, it will by no means warrant us either to live idly, or to make our recreations our continual employments; but the more leisure we have from secular business, the greater portions of our time we ought to consecrate to religion; and since our bodies and our families are so liberally provided for, to be so much the more industrious in supplying the necessities of our souls, that so these may not be the only miserable things about us. But then, our natures being so depraved, as that they cannot dwell long on the severe exercises of religion, and yet so active, as that, if in the intervals of our religion they be not innocently employed, they will be apt to run into mischief, it is in

our own defence necessary, how prosperous soever our outward condition may be, that we should find out some honest business or other to keep our activity regularly exercised. And this will be no hard matter for us to do, considering how many generous, liberal, and ingenious employments there are fit for persons of the highest rank and condition. They may dedicate such portions of their time to the useful studies of philosophy or history, or of the laws and customs of their own country; and such, to the inspection of their own estates, or to overlook and govern their families; and such, to examine the complaints of their tenants, or the necessities of their neighbours, or to reconcile differences, or conciliate love and good neighbourhood among those that are near or under them: in these and such like employments they may innocently exercise their active minds, and thereby not only divert themselves from sinful courses, but also render themselves very useful to the world.

But whatsoever our condition in the world may be, it must doubtless be of very dangerous consequence to our religion not to be innocently and usefully employed. For, as the wise Cato hath observed, *Nihil agendo male agere disces*, i. e. By accustoming yourself to do nothing, you will most certainly learn to do ill. For your busy mind, like nature, will admit of no vacuum, but must be always full of one thing or other; and it can no sooner dismiss its pious or honest thoughts, but vicious and unlawful ones will be swarming about it. For religious, lawful, and sinful objects are the only companions our minds have to converse with; and therefore, since they must and will be conversing with one thing or

other, we ought to take great care, that as soon as ever they have done entertaining religious objects, they be presently supplied and presented with lawful ones, with some honest business or innocent diversion; that so we may not be at leisure to attend to those sinful objects, which, in the others' absence, will be perpetually crowding and thrusting themselves upon us. For when we are neither honestly nor religiously employed, we shall be perfectly at leisure to attend to any invitation to sin; and, since we must still be doing one thing or other, our having nothing else to do will be a strong inducement to do that which is evil, and to spend our restless activity in some irregular course or other, accordingly as we are tempted and inclined. If we are of a busy and pragmatical temper, our leisure will presently invite us to be intermeddling with other folk's business, to be tampering with state-affairs, and casting new models of government, and censuring the wisdom of those public administrations of which we do not understand the reasons. If we are of a froward, peevish, and untractable temper, we shall be apt, when we have nothing else to do, to be venting our activity in factious and turbulent zeal, in seditious pratings and conspiracies, in backbiting our adversaries, and fetching and carrying scandalous reports to create jealousies and animosities between neighbour and neighbour. In a word, if we are of a sanguine and jovial disposition, our idle hours will be so many tempting opportunities to intemperance and wantonness, profaneness and scurrility, and all the other wickednesses of a lewd and dissolute conversation. If therefore we mean to be secured from sinful actions, we must allow ourselves no leisure from religious or

honest ones, which, for the abovenamed reason, we shall find utterly unpracticable, if we be not diligent and industrious in some honest calling.

But whilst men's minds are honestly employed, they will not be at leisure to listen to temptation; and it will be difficult for any of those inducements to sin, which the Devil and outward objects do perpetually suggest to us, to obtain admittance to speak with our thoughts, whilst they are thus taken up with wiser and better company. But as soon as we dismiss these, we do in effect beckon temptations to ourselves, and invite the Devil and the world to invite us to be wicked. For, as we say, opportunity makes the thief, i. e. it tempts him to steal; so when we give the Devil the opportunity of an idle hour, we do thereby tempt him to tempt us, and importunately invite him to steal away the treasure of our innocence, by putting the key of it into his hand, and giving him a free access to it. And though we should be firmly resolved not to sin, yet it is impossible we should be safe so long as we are at leisure to be tempted; because, while we are at leisure, we shall be very often disputing and holding arguments with the tempter, who, by his quirks and sophistries, will many times circumvent such novices as we, before we are aware. But when we are not only resolved against him, but are also so employed, as that we are not at leisure to attend to him, it is past his skill to fasten any temptation upon us. Wherefore, if we would be secure in the course of our Christian warfare, we must follow St. Jerom's counsel to his friend Rusticus, *Semper boni aliquid operis facito, ut Diabolus te semper inveniat occupatum:* Be al-

ways doing one good work or other, that so the Devil may always find thee busy.

IX. To our course and progress in the Christian warfare, it is also necessary that we should endeavour, so far as in us lies, to keep up a constant cheerfulness of spirit in our religion. It is doubtless a great disgrace to our religion to imagine (as too many superstitious Christians do) that it is an enemy to mirth and cheerfulness, and a severe exactor of pensive looks and solemn faces; that men are never serious enough till they are moped into statues, and cloistered from all society but that of their own melancholy thoughts; that it is a gospel duty to whine or to be silent, and retire themselves from the most innocent pleasures and festivities of conversation; and, in a word, that all kind of mirth and facetious humour is to be ranked among those idle words which our Saviour tells us shall be brought to judgment. As if religion were a *caput mortuum*, a heavy, stark, insipid thing, that had neither heat, nor life, nor motion in it; or were intended for a Medusa's head, to transform men into monuments of stone. By which false conceptions of it they render it much more burdensome than it is in its own nature. For to make religion forbid us any thing that is human and natural, is to render it a real grievance unto human nature; it is to make our duty run atilt at the principles of our being, and set our conscience and our nature at variance with one another. And therefore, since to be risible and sociable is as natural to us as to be reasonable, to make our religion an enemy to our mirth and conversation, is to represent it as a tyrannical invader of the essential liberties and pro-

perties of human nature. It is true, indeed, though it denies us not the freedom of an innocent humour, nor disallows those little plaisances and inoffensive railleries of fancy which are sometimes requisite to sauce our conversation, and give it a quicker relish; yet hath it taken care to bound our merriments with the necessary precepts of sobriety and gravity; that so by too much whiffling up and down in the little levities of fancy, our minds may not grow vain, and light, and trifling, and be thereby indisposed to serious thoughts and reflections. But so long as we keep within the bounds of sobriety, and do not sally out into malicious, or scurrilous, or profane jesting, our religion doth not only connive at our mirth, but commend and approve it: and so remote is it from cramping those strings and sinews of the mind, cheerfulness and action, that it recollects their scattered vigour, and winds up their slackness to a true harmony.

For it requires that our *speech should be alway with grace*, Coloss. iv. 6. i. e. as some expositors understand the phrase, that it should not be whining and melancholy, but sprightly and cheerful; it bids us *rejoice evermore*, 1 Thess. v. 16. and *rejoice in the Lord alway, and again rejoice*, Phil. iv. 4. that is, to endeavour to be cheerful in all conditions, and to bear all events with a serene and lightsome mind. And therefore the apostle reckons this among the blessed fruits and effects of that divine Spirit which accompanies and animates Christianity, viz. joy, or cheerfulness, Gal. v. 22. and this is one of the particulars in which the same apostle makes the Christian laws to consist, as they stand opposed to the ritual laws of the Jews; *the kingdom of heaven*, i. e.

the laws of the Christian church, *is not meat and drink*, i. e. consists not of injunctions or prohibitions of things that are of a ritual or indifferent nature; *but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*, Rom. xiv. 17. which three particulars being opposed to things that are unnecessary, must, by the law of oppositions, denote things that are necessary; and therefore, as by righteousness and peace must be meant justice and peaceableness, so by *joy in the Holy Ghost* must be meant cheerfulness and alacrity in doing the will of God; because joy can be in no other sense matter of necessary duty. By all which it is evident, that cheerfulness of temper is so far from being discountenanced by our religion, that it is required and enjoined by it, so far as it is in our power and choice. And indeed it highly becomes us, who serve so good a Master, to be free and cheerful, and thereby to express a grateful sense of his goodness, and of those glorious rewards which we expect from his inexhaustible bounty; but as for a gloomy look and dejected countenance, it better beseems a galley-slave than a servant of God. And as cheerfulness is a duty that very well becomes our state, so it is highly necessary to support and carry us on in our Christian warfare.

For cheerfulness is nature's best friend; it removes its oppressions, enlivens its faculties, and keeps its spirits in a brisk and regular motion, and hereby renders it easy to itself, and useful and serviceable to God and man. It dispels clouds from the mind, and fears from the heart, and kindles and cherishes in us brave and generous affections, and composes our natures into such a regular temper, as is of all others the most fit to receive religious

impressions and the breathings of the Spirit of God. For what the Jews do observe of the spirit of prophecy is as true of the spirit of holiness; that it dwells not with sadness, but with cheerfulness; that being itself of a calm and gentle nature, it loves not to reside with black and melancholy passions, but requires a composed and serene temper to act upon. And hence Tertullian, in his De Spectac. *Deus præcepit Spiritum Sanctum, utpote pro naturæ suæ bono tenerum et delicatum, tranquillitate et lenitate, et quiete et pace tractare; non furore, non bile, non ira, non dolore inquietare:* i. e. "God hath "commanded that the Holy Spirit, who is of a ten-"der and delicate nature, should be entertained by "us with tranquillity and mildness, with quietness "and peace, and that we should take care not to "disturb him with fury and choler, or with anger "and grief." And indeed melancholy naturally infests the Holy Spirit, and disturbs him in all his operations; it overwhelms the fancy with black reeks and vapours, and thereby clouds and darkens the understanding, and intercepts the Holy Spirit's illuminations; and, like red-coloured glass before the eye, causes the most lovely and attractive objects to look bloody and terrible. It distracts the thoughts, and renders them wild, roving, and incoherent; and thereby utterly indisposes them to prayer and consideration, and renders them deaf and unattentive to all good motions and inspirations. It freezes up the heart with despairing fears and despondencies, and represents easy things as difficult to us, and difficult as impossible, and thereby discourages us from all those virtuous attempts to which the blessed Spirit doth so importunately excite and provoke us. In a

word, it naturally benumbs and stupifies the soul, obstructs its motions, and makes it listless and unactive, and so, by indisposing it to cooperate with the Holy Spirit, renders it an incapable subject of his divine grace and influence. Thus melancholy, you see, by its sullen and malevolent aspects, doth obstinately resist and counter-influence the Holy Spirit, without whose aid and assistance we can never hope to prosper in our spiritual warfare.

Wherefore, if we mean to succeed in this great affair, it concerns us to use all honest and innocent means to dispel this black and mischievous humour, and to beget and maintain in our minds a constant serenity and cheerfulness of temper; and whenever our spirits begin to droop and languish, to betake ourselves to such natural remedies, such harmless diversions, refreshments, and recreations, as are fit and proper to raise them up again; and not to suffer them to sink into a bog of melancholy humours, whilst it is in our power by any honest art or invention to support them. Which, if we can but effect, will be of vast advantage to us in the whole course of our religion. For in an even cheerfulness of temper our spirits will be always lively, strong, and active, and fit for the best and noblest operations; they will give light to our understandings, courage to our hearts, and wings to our affections; so that we shall be able more clearly to discern divine and heavenly things, more resolutely to practise, and more vehemently to aspire after them; and our considerations will be more fixed, our devotions more intent, and all our spiritual endeavours more active and vivacious. For a cheerful temper will represent every thing cheerfully to us; it will represent God so

lovely, religion so attractive, the rewards of it so immense, and the difficulties of it so inconsiderable, and thereby inspire us with so much life and courage, as that none of all those spiritual enemies we war and contend against will be able to withstand our resolution.

X. To our course and progress in this our spiritual warfare, it is also necessary that we maintain in our minds a constant sense and expectation of heaven; that since things of the other world are future and invisible, and consequently less apt to touch and affect us than these worldly things which are continually pressing upon our senses, we should, as oft as we have opportunity, withdraw our thoughts from these sensible objects, and retire into the immaterial world, and there entertain ourselves with the close view and contemplation of the joys and glories it abounds with. For we are a sort of beings, that being compounded of flesh and spirit, are by these opposite principles of our nature allied to two opposite worlds, and placed in the middle between heaven and earth, as the common centre wherein those distant regions meet. By our spiritual nature we hold communion with the spiritual world, and by our corporeal with this earthly and sensible one; whose objects being always present with us, and striking as they do immediately upon our senses, we lie much more bare and open to them, than to those of the spiritual world. So that unless we now and then withdraw ourselves from these sensible things, which hang like the cloud between, we can never have a free prospect into that clear heaven above them. And hence it becomes necessary that we should now and then make a solemn retirement of

our thoughts from earthly objects and enjoyments, that so we may approach near enough to heaven to touch and feel the joys and pleasures of it, which, while we transiently behold in this crowd of worldly objects, is placed at such a distance from us, that it looks like a thin, blue landscape, next to nothing; and hath not apparent reality enough in it to raise our desires and expectations.

And hence we are commanded to *set our affections upon*, or as it is in the original, *to mind those things that are above*, Coloss. iii. 2. and that by these *things above*, he means the enjoyments of heaven, it is plain from verse 1. where he expressly tells us, that by the *above*, in which these things are, he means *heaven, where Christ sits at the right hand of God.* So that the sense of the precept is this, that we should fix in our minds such lively representations of the glory and reality of the celestial state, as may raise in our hearts a longing desire and earnest expectation of being made partakers of it. Which hope and expectation he elsewhere enjoins us to *put on for an helmet*, i. e. for a necessary piece of defensive armour, against the difficulties and discouragements of our Christian warfare, 1 Thess. v. 8. And Heb. vi. 19. *this hope which enters into that within the veil*, i. e. into heaven, is said to be the *anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast*, i. e. it is that which stays and secures the soul in the midst of those many storms of temptation it meets withal in its voyage to heaven; and it being so, we are bid to look to and imitate our blessed Lord, *who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God*, Heb. xii. 2. The meaning of all which

is, that we should earnestly endeavour to fix in our minds a vigorous sense and expectation of that immortal happiness with which God hath promised to crown all that come off conquerors from this spiritual warfare; that all along as we march we should keep heaven in our eye, and encourage ourselves with the hope of it to charge through all those difficulties and temptations that oppose us in the way: in a word, that we should frequently awaken in our minds the glorious thoughts of a blessed immortality, and possess ourselves with a lively expectation of enjoying it, if we hold out to the end.

Which is a duty of a vast consequence to us in the course of our spiritual warfare. For heaven being the end and reward of our warfare must needs be the grand encouragement thereunto; and consequently, if once we lose sight of heaven, and suffer earthly things to interpose and eclipse the glory and reality of it, our courage will never be able to bear up against those manifold temptations that do continually assault us. But whilst we continue under a lively sense of that blessed recompense of reward, that will so spirit and invigorate our resolution, that nothing will be able to withstand it; and all the terrors and allurements that sin can propose will be forced to fly before it, and to retreat like so many impotent waves, that dash against a rock of adamant. For while we are under a lively sense and expectance of the happiness above, we live as it were in the midway between heaven and earth, where we have an open prospect of the glories of both, and do plainly see how faint and dim these below are in comparison with those above; how they are forced to sneak and disappear in the presence of those eter-

nal splendours, and to shroud their vanquished beauties, as the stars do when the sun appears. And whilst we interchangeably turn our eyes from one to the other, how fruitlessly do the pleasures, profits, and honours below, importune us to abandon the joys and glories above, and with what indignation do we listen to the proposals of such a senseless and ridiculous exchange! And could we but always keep ourselves at this stand, we should be so fortified with the sight of those happy regions above, that no temptation from below would ever be able to approach us; and the sense that we are going on to that blessed state would carry us through all the weary stages of our duty with an indefatigable vigour. For what may a man not do with heaven in his eye, with that potent, I had almost said omnipotent, encouragement before him? To pull out a right eye, to cut off a right hand, to tear a darling lust from his heart, even when it is wrapped about it and twisted with its strings, what an easy achievement is it to a man that hath a heaven of immortal glories in his view! The hope of which is enough to recommend even racks and torments, and turn the flames of martyrdom into a bed of roses. For it was this blessed prospect that enabled the good old martyrs to triumph so gloriously as they did in the midst of their sufferings: they knew that a few moments would put an end to their miseries, and that when once they had weathered those short storms, they should arrive at a most blessed harbour, and be crowned at their landing; and that from thence they should look back with infinite joy and delight upon the dangerous sea they had escaped, and for ever bless those storms and winds that drove them to

that happy port; for as the author to the Hebrews tells us, *they sought a heavenly country*, Heb. xi. 14, 16.

XI. And lastly, to the successful progress of our Christian warfare, it is also necessary that we should live in the frequent use of the public ordinances and institutions of our religion; namely, in the religious observation of the Lord's day, and in frequent communion with one another in the holy sacrament, both which are of great use to us in the course and progress of our spiritual warfare. For as for the Lord's day, it is instituted, and ever since the apostle's time hath been observed in the Christian church, as a day of public worship and weekly thanksgiving for our Saviour's resurrection, in which the great work of our redemption was consummated. And certainly it must needs be of vast advantage to be one day in seven sequestered from the world, and employed in divine offices, in solemn prayers, praises, and thanksgivings, and to be obliged to assist and edify one another by the mutual example and union of our devotions; to hear the duties of our religion explained, the sins against it reprehended, and the doctrines of it unfolded and reduced to plain and easy principles of practice. What a mighty advantage might we reap from all these blessed ministries, if we would but attend to them with that concern and seriousness which the matter of them requires and deserves! especially, if when the public offices are over, we would not let loose ourselves all the rest of the day, as we too frequently do, to our secular cares and diversions, and thereby choke those good instructions we have heard, and stifle those devout and pious affections which have

been raised and excited in us; but instead of so doing, we would devote at least some good portion of it to the instruction of our families, and to the private exercise of our religion, to meditation and prayer, to the examination of ourselves concerning our past behaviour, and the reinforcing our resolution to behave ourselves better for the future: if, I say, we would thus spend our Lord's day, we should doubtless find ourselves better men for it all the week after; we should go into the world again with much better affections, and stronger resolutions, with our graces more vigorous, and our bad inclinations more reduced and tamed: and whereas the Jews were to gather manna enough on their sixth day, to feed their bodies on the ensuing sabbath, we should gather manna enough upon our sabbath, to feed and strengthen our souls all the six days after.

But to this we must also add frequent communions with one another in the holy sacrament, which is an ordinance instituted on purpose by our blessed Saviour, for the improving and furthering us in our Christian warfare. For besides that herein we have one of the most puissant arguments against sin represented by visible signs to our sense, viz. the bloody sacrifice of our blessed Lord to expiate and make atonement for it; besides that those bleeding wounds of his, which are here represented by the breaking of the bread, and pouring out of the wine, do proclaim our sins his assassins and murderers, the thought of which, if we had any ingenuity in us, were enough to incense in us the most implacable indignation against them; besides that his sufferings for our sins, of which this sacred solemnity is a lively picture, do horribly remonstrate

God's displeasure against them who would not be induced to pardon them upon any meaner expiation than the blood of his Son, than which hell itself is not a more dreadful argument to scare and terrify us from them; in a word, besides that his so freely submitting and offering up himself to be a propitiation for us, of which this holy festival is a solemn commemoration, is an expression of kindness sufficient to captivate the most ungrateful souls, and extort obedience from them; besides all this, I say, as it is a feast upon the sacrifice of his body and blood, it is a federal rite, whereby God and we, by feasting together, do, according to the ancient customs both of Jews and heathens, mutually oblige ourselves to one another; whereby God, by giving us the mystical bread and wine, and we by receiving them, do mutually engage ourselves to one another upon those sacred pledges of Christ's body and blood, that we will faithfully perform each other's part of that everlasting covenant which was purchased by him. And what can be a greater restraint to us when we are solicited to any sin, than the sense of being under such a dreadful vow and obligation? With what face dare we listen to any temptation to evil, when we remember how lately we solemnly engaged ourselves to the contrary, and took the sacrament upon it? And verily I doubt it is this that lies at the bottom of that seeming modest pretence of unworthiness, which men are wont to urge in excuse for their neglect of the sacrament; namely, that they love their lusts, and cannot resolve to part with them, and therefore are afraid to make such a solemn abjuration of them, as the eating and drinking the consecrated elements implies.

And I confess, if this be their reason, they are unworthy indeed, the more shame for them; but it is such an unworthiness as is so far from excusing, that it only aggravates their neglect. For, for any man to plead that he dares not receive the sacrament, because he is resolved to sin on, is to make that which is his fault, his apology, and to excuse one sin with another. Wherefore, if we are heartily resolved by the grace of God to reform and amend, let us abstain no longer from this great federal rite, upon pretence of unworthiness. For it is by the use of this, among other means, that we are to improve and grow more and more worthy. For the very repetition of our resolution, as I have shewed above, is a proper means of strengthening and confirming it; and certainly it must needs be much more so, when it is renewed and repeated with the solemnity of a sacrament. And therefore it is worth observing, how much care our Lord hath taken, in the very constitution of our religion, to oblige us to a constant, solemn repetition of our good resolutions. For at our first entrance into covenant with him, we are to be baptized, in which solemnity we do openly renounce the Devil and all his works, and religiously devote ourselves to his service. But because we are apt to forget this our baptismal vow, and the matter of it is continually to be performed, and more than one world depends upon it, therefore he hath thought fit not to trust wholly to this first engagement, but hath so methodized our religion, as that we are ever and anon obliged to give him new security. For which end, he hath instituted this other sacrament, which is not like that of baptism, to be received by us once for

all, but to be often reiterated and repeated, that so upon the frequent returns of it we might still be obliged to repeat over our old vows of obedience. For he hath not only enjoined us that we should *do this in remembrance of him*, Luke xxii. 19. i. e. that we should celebrate this sacred festival in the memory of his passion; but by thus doing, the apostle tells us, we are to continue the memorial of it to the end of the world, or *to shew his death till he comes*, 1 Cor. xi. 26. And that this doth not, like the precept of baptism, oblige us for once only and no more, is evident from the foregoing words of this last recited text, *as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup*, which plainly shews, that these sacramental elements are to be more than once received by us. It is true, how often it is to be done, neither Christ nor his apostles have any where defined; but if we consult primitive example, (which in the absence of express precept is the best rule to determine ourselves by,) we shall find that it was very frequently received. For from some passages in the Acts of the Apostles, it seems probable that Christians did then communicate every day, as particularly Acts ii. 46. where they are said *to continue daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread*, κατ' οἶκον, in the house, that is, as it seems probable, in some upper room of the temple; though perhaps this *daily* may refer only to the Lord's day, agreeably to that, Acts xx. 7. *On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.* But it is certain that whensoever they assembled to the public worship, they closed it with the Lord's supper; which they did for a great while in the western churches

every day in the week, and in the eastern, as St. Basil tells us, Epist. 289. four times a week, besides festivals. So that allowing for our declensions from the primitive zeal and devotion, one would think that to communicate now once in four weeks should be a very moderate proportion. But as for those that wholly neglect this sacred institution, for my own part I see not how they can excuse themselves from being guilty of a wilful rebellion against their Saviour; or with what confidence they can expect either that he should assist them with his grace on the way, or crown them with his salvation in the end, when they so perversely turn their backs upon an ordinance which he hath solemnly instituted for a conveyance of the one and a seal of the other.

But would we take that care that becomes us, to prepare ourselves for, and frequent this holy institution, there is no doubt but we should find it of mighty advantage to us in the whole course of our religion. For till we are arrived to a confirmed state of good, our holy fervours will be very apt to cool, our good purposes to slacken and unwind, and our virtuous endeavours to languish and tire; and therefore, unless we take care frequently to revive our religion with this spiritual repast and restorative, and still to add new fuel to it as the flame decays, it will quickly pine away and expire. But if upon the solemn returns of this sacred festival, we would constantly come with due preparation to our Master's table, and here renew our vows, reinvigorate our resolutions, repair our decays, and put our sluggish graces into a new fermentation, we should find our religion not only live, but thrive, and be still acquiring new degrees of strength and activity.

But because this argument hath been already so fully handled in our practical treatises, particularly by the reverend Dr. Patrick in his *Mensa Mystica*, and *Christian Sacrifice*, I shall refer the reader thither for the farther consideration of it.

And thus, with all the brevity I could, I have endeavoured to give an account of those duties which are necessary in the course and progress of our Christian warfare.

SECT. IV.

Containing certain motives to animate men against the difficulty of these duties which appertain to the course of our Christian warfare.

HOW necessary and useful to us those aforenamed duties are, in the course of our Christian warfare, hath been sufficiently shewn. So that now there is nothing that our sloth and unwillingness can object against them, but only this, that they are very difficult, and do require more of our time and care and pains, than we can conveniently spare from our other necessary occasions; that the practice of them is so unpleasant and severe, and attended with so much cumber and trouble, that we very much doubt we shall never be able to go through with them. And therefore to remove this objection out of men's way, and to excite them to the practice of these necessary duties, I shall for a conclusion of this argument add, to what hath been said of it, these following considerations.

1. That whatsoever difficulty there is in the practice of them, we may thank ourselves for it.

2. That in the course of our sin there is a great

deal of difficulty, as well as in our warfare against it.

3. That how difficult soever this warfare may be, it must be endured, or that which is a great deal worse.

4. That though it be difficult, yet there is nothing in it but what the grace of God will render possible to us, if we be not wanting to ourselves.

5. That the practice of these duties is not so difficult, but that it is fairly consistent with all our other necessary occasions and diversions.

6. That the difficulty is such as will certainly abate and wear off by degrees, if we constantly practise them.

7. That with the difficulty of them there is a world of present peace and satisfaction intermingled.

8. That their difficulty is abundantly compensated by the final reward of them.

I. Consider, that whatsoever difficulty there is in the practice of them, we may thank ourselves for it. For if we had betaken ourselves to the practice of religion as soon as we were capable of it, before we had entered ourselves into sinful courses, and had therein contracted sinful habits and inclinations, we might have prevented those difficulties which we now complain of. For our religion was made for and adapted to our nature, and would have sweetly accorded with all its affections and propensions, had we not vitiated them by our own wilful sin, and clapped a preternatural bias upon them. But though the light be naturally congruous to the eye, yet if through a distillation of ill humours into it the eye grow sore and weak, there is nothing more grievous and offensive to it. And so it is with reli-

gion, which to the pure and uncontaminated nature of a man is the most grateful and agreeable thing in the world; but if by our own ill government we disease our nature, and deprave its primitive constitution, it is no wonder that religion, which was so well proportioned to it in its purity, should sit hard and uneasy upon it in its apostasy and corruption. For to a man that is in a fever every thing is bitter, even honey, which when he is well is exceeding sweet and grateful; but the bitterness which he tastes is not in the honey, but in the gall which overflows his own palate: and so to a nature that is diseased with any unnatural lust, that which is most congruous to itself will be most nauseous to its disease; and those duties which in its health it would have embraced with the greatest pleasure, will in its sickness be the greatest burden and oppression to it. And when we have spoiled the purity of our constitution, and are degenerated from the human nature into the brutal or diabolical, it is no great wonder that the religion of a man should be a burden to the nature of a beast or a devil. So that whatsoever difficulties there are in religion, they arise not out of the nature of the things it requires, but out of the perverse indispositions of our natures to them: and these were for the most part contracted by ourselves: so that instead of complaining of the difficulty, we ought to strive and contend the more earnestly against it, because we may thank ourselves for it. When a man hath played the fool, and set his house on fire, the sense of his own folly ought to make him more industrious to extinguish it; but if, instead of so doing, he should sit with his hands in his bosom, and complain of the mischief,

and the difficulty of stopping it, what would folks say of him? Mischievous creature, doth it become thee to sit here idly complaining of the effect of thy own villainy, whilst it is yet in thy power, wouldst thou but bestir thyself, to quench the flame, and prevent the spreading of it? For shame get up, and do thy utmost endeavour to repair thy own act, and to extinguish this spreading mischief, of which thou art the author. Since therefore we have been so obstinately foolish, as to set fire to our own souls, and kindle in them by our vicious courses such destructive flames of unnatural lust, how monstrously ridiculous is it, whilst it is yet in our power to extinguish them, to sit whining and complaining of the difficulty of it, and in the mean time permit them to rage and burn on without interruption! O miserable men, if they are so hard to be quenched, who may ye thank for it? Was it not you that kindled them, and do you sit idly complaining of your own act, when you should be the more industrious to repair the mischief of it, because it is your own? For shame arise and bestir yourselves; and since you are conscious that the difficulties of your religion are of your own creating, and that those lusts which indispose ye to it are the products of your own actions, let this excite you to a more vigorous endeavour to subdue and conquer them.

II. Consider, that in the course of your sins there is a great deal of difficulty, as well as in your warfare against them: for I dare appeal to your own experience, whether you have not found a great deal of hardship in wickedness, especially while you were educating and training up your natures to it. Did not your nature oftentimes recoil and start and boggle

at your vicious actions; and were you not fain sometimes to curb and sometimes to spur it, to commit many outrages and violences upon it, whilst you were backing and managing it, before you could reduce it to a through pace in iniquity? How often have you put your modest nature to the blush, at the sense of a filthy and uncomely action, whilst your wicked will hath been dragging it along like a timorous virgin to an adulterer's bed! and what terrible shrieks have your consciences many times given in the midst of your sinful commissions, when you were acting the first rapes upon your innocence! How many a pensive mood hath the review of your sinful pleasures cost ye, and what swarms of horror and dreadful expectation hath the reflection on your past guilts raised in your minds! And then, with what excessive difficulty have you been fain to practise some vices, only to get an habit of practising them more easily; how often have you been forced to swallow sickness, to drink dead palsies and foaming epilepsies, to render your intemperances familiar to you; and in what qualms, and fainting sweats, and sottish confusions have you many times awaked, before ever you could connaturalize your midnight revels to your temper! And when, with so much labour and violence, you have pretty well trained and exercised yourselves in this hellish warfare, and thereby rendered it natural and habitual to you, to how many inconveniences hath it daily exposed you, and what base and unmanly shifts hath it put you upon, to extricate yourselves out of those difficulties wherein it hath involved you! What violent passions and perturbations doth it raise in your minds, and into what wild tumults of action doth it frequently hurry you! In a word,

how doth it perplex and intrigue the whole course of your lives, and entangle ye in a labyrinth of knavish tricks and collusions, so that many times you are at your wits' end, and know not which way to turn yourselves! All these difficulties, and a great many more, which I cannot presently think of, you must have contended with in a sinful course of action, if you have made any considerable experiment of it.

And do you complain of the difficulty of persevering in religion; you that have so courageously persevered in a worse way against difficulties that are as great, all things considered, if not greater; you that have hitherto sinned on so industriously, that have broke through so many strong barricadoes to come at and enjoy your lusts, are you not ashamed to start and boggle, as you do, at the difficulties of virtue and religion? Look but how the industrious sinner upbraids you; his way leads directly to ruin, and he knows it; and yet he presses on courageously, as if he were ambitious to be a hero in iniquity, and charges through all the modesty of human nature, through all his native sense of a God and a divine vengeance: he marches forward through infamy and diseases, through dangers, and a world of inconveniences, and offers a kind of violence to hell, as if he meant to force open its brasen portal, and enter headlong into it, before it is ready to receive him; whilst you, in the mean time, like a company of crest-fallen creatures, stand shivering at a few trifling difficulties in your way, though you have heaven for your end, and a crown of glory for your reward.

In short, therefore, this is the true state of your case; choose which side you please, whether to

march under Christ's or the Devil's banner; you must expect beforehand to encounter some difficulties, yea, and perhaps as great on the one side as on the other; and if so, then you have little else to do, but to compare their ends, and to consider which of the two is most eligible, a crown of glory or eternal torment.

III. Consider, that how difficult soever this your spiritual warfare may be, it must be endured, or that which is much more intolerable. I confess, were it not absolutely necessary, we might, with some colour of reason, urge the difficulty of it, to excuse ourselves from undertaking and prosecuting it; but when our case is such, as that we must either conquer or perish, swim through or sink under the difficulties we complain of, the matter will admit of no further debate, but we must e'en resolve of the two evils to choose that which is the least. When the ship hath sprung a leak, it is a madness for the mariners to sit still and complain of the pains and labour of pumping; for in the extremity they are in, there is no more to be said, they must pump or perish: and it is not to be debated, where there is so vast an inequality between the objects of their choice, which of the two they were best to fix upon; whether to take pains for the present to secure the ship, or to sit still and suffer themselves to be swallowed up in the ocean. And thus it is in the case before us: our soul hath sprung a leak, and let into its holds those Stygian waters of sensual and diabolical lust, which will sink us down to hell, if they be not pumped out again: and this is not to be done without a great deal of labour and difficulty. But what

then? were we not better labour for a while than perish for ever? Do we talk of labour, when our souls are at stake, and our immortal life is upon the brink of an everlasting well or ill-being? In other cases we never think much to endure a present inconvenience for the prevention of a future mischief; we are content to fast, when we perceive it is necessary to obviate an approaching fever; to be cupped and scarified with all the artifice of pain, to prevent or remove a dangerous disease; and in all other cases are generally willing to prolong our torment, that we may be the longer a dying; except where the prescription is virtue, and the death prescribed against is eternal; though this be the most formidable mischief of all, as being the utmost consummation of human misery, and compared with which all the labours and difficulties of religion have not the proportion of a gentle fleabiting to the acutest torments of the rack or stone. For I beseech you to consider, will it not be easier for you to endure the short agonies of a bitter repentance, than the horrid despair of a damned ghost for ever? to thwart a foolish and unreasonable lust, than to lie roaring to eternity upon the rack of a guilty conscience? Is there any proportion between your abstaining from the pleasures of sin, that are but for a moment, and your being excluded from heaven and all hope of happiness for ever? Alas! if it be so difficult to you to contend with an evil habit, to struggle with a stiff and obstinate inclination, how difficult will it be to dwell with everlasting burnings, and suffer the dire effects of an unappeasable vengeance to eternity! Wherefore, since we are under an absolute necessity of enduring the one or

the other, in the name of God let us act like men, and of the two evils choose that which is most tolerable.

IV. Consider, that though it be difficult, yet there is nothing in it but what the grace of God will render possible to us, if we be not wanting to ourselves. I confess the necessity of it would be no argument to engage us to undertake it, were it not a possible undertaking; yea, and readily acknowledge, that it very far exceeds our poor possibility singly and nakedly considered: so that if we were left to struggle with the difficulty of it in our own single strength, we might justly despair of success, and so tamely lie down, and yield ourselves foiled and defeated. But, God be praised! this is not our case; for though when we cast our eyes upon the many violent inclinations to evil that are within us, and upon the numberless temptations to evil that are about us; when we seriously reflect upon the weakness of our reason, and the strength of our lust, and the number, and nearness, and prevalency of those objects from without, that are continually pressing upon and assaulting our good resolutions; though, I say, when we reflect upon all this, we are ready to cry out as Elisha's servant did, when he beheld the city compassed with horses and with chariots, *Alas, master, how shall we do?* how shall we be able to withstand all this mighty army of enemies? Yet, if we turn our eyes from our own weakness, and our enemies' strength, to those gracious promises of assistance which the Father of mercies hath made to us, we shall quickly be able to answer ourselves as Elisha did him, *Fear not*, O my soul, *for they that are with us are more*, and more powerful, *than they*

that are against us. For we have with us, not only the outward arguments of religion, which are of infinite more force than any outward inducement to vice whatsoever; we have with us, not only the holy angels of God, who are as willing, and more able to direct and strengthen us, than all the infernal furies to ensnare and captivate us; but we have with us also the almighty Spirit of God, who, by the economy of heaven, and the promise of our Lord, is obliged to minister to us in all our necessities, and to aid and assist us against all those difficulties which would be otherwise too hard for us, if we were left to ourselves. So that if we do but hold true to our own interest, and take care that we do not drive him away from us, by siding wilfully with our own enemies against him, we shall not, no, we cannot miscarry; unless (which is impossible) some such temptation should befall us, as neither we nor he can resist and cope with. For till by our wilful sin we have forfeited our title to the promise of his assistance, we are as sure of his help in all things that are necessary, as we can be of our own endeavour; and it is not more in our power to do what we can by the strength of our own faculties, than it is to engage him to enable us to do what we cannot without his aid and assistance. For by faithfully endeavouring to persevere in well-doing, we entitle ourselves to all the necessary assistance of his grace; and so long as this title continues, we are masters, not only of our own strength, but of his too, and can do, not only whatsoever is within our own power without him, but also whatsoever is in his power concurring with ours.

So that though our warfare be difficult, it cannot

be impossible, unless we will have it so. For to be sure there is nothing in it that can be too hard for God's grace cooperating with the powers of our nature; and therefore there can be nothing in it too hard for us, whilst it is in our power to secure ourselves of that his gracious cooperation.

Wherefore let us stand boggling no longer at the difficulty of our progress in religion, since, God be praised! there is nothing required of us beyond what we are able. Do but your part, which is only what you can, and then doubt not but God will do his: put forth but your honest hearty endeavour, and earnestly implore his aid and assistance, and if then you miscarry, let heaven answer for it. But if, upon a pretence that your work is too difficult, and your enemies too mighty for you, you lay down your arms, and resolve to contend with them no longer, let heaven and earth judge between God and you which is to be charged with your ruin; God, that so graciously offered you his help, that stretched out his hand to raise ye up, tendered you his Spirit to guard and conduct ye through all oppositions to eternal happiness; or you, that would not be persuaded to do any thing for yourselves; but rather chose to perish with ease, than take any pains to be saved.

V. Consider that the practice of these duties is not so difficult, but that it is fairly consistent with all your other necessary occasions. When men are told how many duties are necessary to their successful progress in religion, what patience and constancy, what frequent examinations and trials of themselves, what lively thoughts and expectations of heaven, &c. they are apt to conclude, that if they should en-

gage to do all this, they must resolve to do nothing else, but even shake hands with all their secular business and diversions, and cloister up themselves from all other affairs: which is a very great mistake, proceeding either from their not considering or not understanding the nature of these religious exercises, the greatest part of which are such as are to be wholly transacted in the mind, whose motions and operations are much more nimble and expedite than those of the body, and so may be very well intermixed with our secular employments, without any let or hinderance to them. For what great time is there required for a man now and then to revolve a few wise and useful thoughts in his mind; to consider the nature of an action when it occurs; and reflect upon an error when it is past, and hath escaped him? I can consider a temptation when it is approaching me, and with a thought or two of heaven or hell arm my resolution against it in the twinkling of an eye; I can look up to heaven with an eye of earnest expectance, and send my soul thither in a short ejaculation, without interrupting my business: and yet these, and such as these, do make up a great part of those religious exercises wherein the proper duty of our Christian warfare consists. And though to the due performance of these duties, it will be sometimes necessary that our minds should dwell longer upon them, yet it is to be considered, that when once we are entered upon the practice of them, our mind will be much more at leisure to attend to them: for then it will be in a great measure taken off from its wild and unreasonable vagaries, from its sinful designs and lewd contrivances, from its fantastic complacencies in the pleasures of sin,

and anxious reflections on the guilt and danger of it: and when all this rubbish is thrown out of the mind there will be room enough for good thoughts to dwell in it, without interfering with any of our necessary cares and diversions. For would we but give these our religious exercises as much room in our minds as we did heretofore freely allow to our sins, they would ask no more, but leave us as much at leisure for our other affairs as ever.

I confess there are some of these duties that exact of us their fixed and stated portions of time, such as our morning consideration and prayer, our evening examination and prayer, our religious observation of the Lord's day, and our preparing for and receiving the holy sacrament; but all this may be very well spared without any prejudice to any of our lawful occasions. For what great matter of time doth it ask for a man to think over a few good thoughts in the morning, and forearm his mind with them against the temptations of the day; to recommend himself to God in a short, pithy, and affectionate prayer, and repeat his purpose and resolution of obedience? What an easy matter were it for you to borrow so many moments as would suffice for this purpose from your bed, and your comb and looking-glass. And as for the evening, when your business is over, it is a very hard case, if you cannot spare so much time either from your company or refreshments, as to make a short review of the actions of the day; to confess and beg pardon for the evils you have fallen into, or to bless God for the good you have done, and the evils you have avoided; and then to recommend yourselves to his grace and protection for the future. And as for your religious observation of the Lord's

day, it is only the seventh part of your time; and can you think much to devote that, or at least the greatest part of that, to him who gives you your being and duration? And lastly, as for your receiving the Lord's supper, it is at most but once a month that you are invited to it; and it is a hard case, if out of so great a proportion of time you cannot afford a few hours to examine your defects, and to quicken your graces, and to dress and prepare yourselves for that blessed commemoration. Alas! how easy were all this to a willing mind! And if we had but half that concern for our souls and everlasting interest that we have for our bodies, we should count such things as these not worth our mentioning. How disingenuous therefore is it for men to make such tragical outcries as they do of the hardship and difficulty of this spiritual warfare, when there is nothing at all in it that intrenches either on their secular callings or necessary diversions; when they may be going onward to heaven, while they are doing their business, and mortifying their lusts, even in the enjoyment of their recreations, and so take their pleasure both here and hereafter.

VI. Consider that the difficulty of these duties is such, as will certainly abate and wear off by degrees, if we constantly practise them: for in all undertakings whatsoever, it is use that makes perfectness, and that which is exceeding hard to us at first, either through want of skill to manage, or inclination to practise it, will by degrees grow easier and easier, as we are more and more accustomed and familiarized to it. And this we shall find by experience, if we constantly exercise ourselves in these progressive duties of our religion, which, to a mind that hath

been altogether unacquainted with them, will at first be very difficult. It will go against the grain of a wild and ungoverned nature, to be confined from its extravagant ranges by the strict ties of a religious discipline: and to reduce a roving mind to severe consideration, or a fickle one to constancy and resolution, or an unreflecting one to self-examination; to raise up an earthly mind to heavenly thoughts and expectations, and confine a listless and regardless one to strict watchfulness and circumspection; to confine a carnal mind to frequent sacraments, or an indevout and careless one to its daily and weekly periods of devotion, will at the first, no doubt, be very painful and tedious; but after we have persisted in, and for a while accustomed ourselves to it, we shall find it quickly grow more natural and easy to us, and from being grievous it will become tolerable, from being tolerable, easy, and from being easy, delightful. For when once we come to feel the good effects of those duties in our natures, how fast our lusts do decline, our dispositions mend, and all our graces improve in the use of them, the sense of this will mightily endear and ingratiate them to us. Just as it is with a scholar: when he first enters upon the methods of learning, they are very tedious and irksome to him; the pains of reading, observing, and recollecting, the confinement to a study, and the racking his brains with severe reasoning and discourse, are things that he cannot easily away with, till he hath been inured and accustomed to them a while; and then they grow more natural and easy to him. But when he comes to be sensible of the great advantages he reaps by his labour, how it raises and improves his understanding, enlarges its

prospect, and furnishes its conception with brave and useful notions; then do his labours, which were formerly so grievous, become not only easy but delectable to him. And even so it is with these spiritual exercises of religion, which to unexperienced persons, that are yet but newly entered upon them, will be very painful and troublesome; but if they have but patience and courage to hold on, custom will quickly render them more tolerable; and when they have practised them so long as to find and perceive the blessed effects of them; how much they have contributed to the reforming their tempers, reducing their inclinations, filing and polishing their rough and mishapen natures; with what amiable graces, divine and godlike dispositions, they have adorned and beautified them; their sense and feeling of this will convert them all into delightful recreations. Thus as the custom of them will render them easy, so the blessed fruits of them will make them delectable; the former will render them facile as nature, the latter eligible as reward. And if so, why should we be discouraged, fainthearted creatures that we are, at those little present difficulties, which our diligence will soon wear off, and convert into ease and pleasure?

VII. Consider, that with the difficulty of them there is a world of present peace and satisfaction intermingled. If you fall back again to your old lusts, instead of these present difficulties you start at, you must expect to have the trouble of a guilty soul to contend with; which, if you have any sense of God, and of good and evil, will be much more grievous to you than they. But if you go on, you will carry with you a quiet and a satisfied mind, a

conscience that will entertain you all along with such sweet and calm reflections, as will abundantly compensate you for all the hardships and difficulties you encounter on the way; that with innumerable iterations will be always resounding to your honest endeavours those best and sweetest echoes, *Well done, good and profitable servant,* how bravely hast thou acquitted thyself, how manfully hast thou stood to thy duty against all oppositions, and with what a gallant resolution hast thou repulsed those temptations that bore up against thee! Now for a man to have his own mind continually applauding him, and crowning his actions with the approbations of his conscience, is encouragement enough to balance a thousand difficulties; and the sense that he hath done his duty, and that the God above, and the vice-god within him, are both satisfied and pleased with him, will give him such a grateful relish of each action of his warfare, that the difficulty will only serve to enhance the pleasure of it.

And as he will have great peace and satisfaction whilst he is contending with these difficulties, so when he hath so far conquered them, as that they are no longer able to curb and withhold him from the free and vigorous exercise of the heavenly virtues, but in despite of them he can easily moderate his passions and appetites by the laws of his reason, and freely love, adore, and imitate, submit to and confide in the ever-blessed God, and cheerfully exert an unforced plainness and simplicity, good-will and charity, submission and condescension, peace and concord towards all men; when, I say, he hath so far surmounted the difficulties of his warfare, as that with any measure of freedom and vigour he can put

forth all these heavenly virtues, he will find himself not only in a quiet, but in a heavenly condition. For these heavenly graces are the palate by which the immortal mind tastes and relishes its heaven, the blessed organs and sensories by which it feels and perceives the joys of the world to come, and without which it can no more relish and enjoy them, than the senseless hive can the sweetness of the honey that is in it. And consequently the more quick and vivacious these heavenly organs of the mind are, and the more they are disburdened of those carnal and devilish lusts that blunt their sense and perception, the more accurately they will taste the joys and pleasures of heaven. So that when by the constant practice of the warfaring duties of religion, we have conquered those bad inclinations of our natures, which render the heavenly virtues so difficult to us, and do so clog and encumber us in the exercise of them, we shall find ourselves in a heaven upon earth, and each act of virtue will be a presention and foretaste of the joys of the celestial life. And being arrived at this blessed state in which all heavenly virtue is so connaturalized to us, the sweet experience we shall have of the unspeakable joys and pleasures it abounds with, will cause us to look back with wondrous content and satisfaction upon all those difficulties we contended with in our way to it, and bless those prayers and tears, and strivings with ourselves, those tedious watchings and self-examinations, &c. by which we have now at last conquered and subdued them.

Wherefore, since the practice of these our warfaring duties hath so much present peace going along with it, and since by its natural drift and tendency

it is leading us forward to a state of so much pleasure and satisfaction, what a madness is it for a man to be beaten off from it by those present little difficulties that attend it! What man that consults his own interest would ever desist from the prosecuting such a gainful warfare, in which, to make him amends for the present pains it puts him to, he is not only possessed of peace of conscience for the present, but assured of a happy life for the future, when he hath conquered the difficulties he contends with.

VIII. Consider that the difficulty of these duties is abundantly compensated by the reward of them. A generous mind will think no means too hard, which tend to noble and worthy ends; in the prosecution of which, opposition only whets its courage and resolution. So that doubtless, had we any spark of generosity in us, the vastness and excellency of the end we pursue would make us despise all difficulties in the way to it. What a meanness of spirit therefore doth it argue in us, to stand boggling as we do at the difficulties of religion; to think much of spending a few days or years in this world in striving and contending with our inclinations, in consideration and watchfulness, in earnest prayer and severe reflections on ourselves, when we are assured beforehand, that at the conclusion of this short conflict we shall be carried off by angels in triumph to heaven, and there receive, from the Captain of our salvation, a crown of everlasting joys and pleasures; when, after a few moments' pains and labour, we shall live millions of millions of most happy ages in the ravishing fruition of a boundless good, and after these are expired, have as many millions of millions more to live. What an unconscionable thing is it for us to

complain of any difficulty, who have such a vast recompense of reward in our view! In the name of God, sirs, what would you have? Why, we would have heaven drop down into our mouths, and not put us to all this trouble of reaching and climbing after it. Would you so? It is a very modest desire indeed. That is, you would have the God of heaven thrust his favours upon you, while you scorn and despise them, and prostitute his heaven to a company of drones that do not think it worth their while to go out of their hives to gather it. O! for shame, look once more upon heaven, and consider again what it is to dwell in the paradise of the world with God, and angels, and saints, and in their blessed company to live out an eternity in the most rapturous contemplations, and loves, and joys; to bathe our dilated faculties in an overflowing river of pleasures, and in perfect ease, health, and vigour of mind, to feed upon a happiness that is as large as our capacities, and as lasting as our beings. Is this a reward of that inconsiderable nature, that we should think much to labour and contend for it? is not the hope of being satisfied for ever, a sufficient encouragement to induce us to deny our lusts and appetites a few moments? or is there not good enough in an everlasting rest to countervail a few days and years labour and contention? What though you pant and labour now while you are climbing the everlasting hills, God be praised, it is not so far to the top, but that the pleasant gales and glorious prospects you shall everlastingly enjoy there, will so abundantly compensate for the difficulty of the ascent, as that, instead of complaining of it, you will to eternal ages reflect upon it with pleasure and de-

light. Wherefore, when your courage begins to shrink at the difficulty of your warfare, do but lift up your eyes to the recompense of reward; and to be sure, if you have any heart, that will inspire you with such a brave resolution, as nothing will be too hard for you but what is absolutely impossible. For how can we be disheartened at any superable difficulty, so long as we are animated with the persuasion, that if we have our *fruit unto holiness, our end shall be everlasting life?*

SECT. V.

Concerning those duties which appertain to the perfection and consummation of our Christian warfare, shewing what they are, and how effectually they conduce to the perfecting us in the virtues of the heavenly life.

I PROCEED now to the third and last part of our Christian warfare, viz. the consummation of it; which is final perseverance: for after we have actually engaged, and made some progress in it, our next care and duty is, that we do not relapse, and basely retreat from what we have so prosperously undertaken, and hitherto so effectually prosecuted, but that so long as we live, we persist in an open defiance to our sins, and endeavour to pursue and mortify our inclinations to them, and persevere in the practice of all virtue; still endeavouring thereby to improve and grow on to perfection, that so we may die as we have hitherto lived, and consummate our warfare in a final victory; and that when our Lord shall come, or send his herald, death, to summon us off from the field, we may be found fighting under his banner against sin, the world, and the

Devil, and finally die as we have lived, his faithful soldiers and followers. For this he indispensably exacts of us, viz. *that we should be faithful unto death*, Rev. ii. 10. *that we should patiently continue in well doing*, Rom. ii. 7. *that we should endure to the end*, Matt. x. 22. *and hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end*, Heb. iii. 14. *that we should keep his works to the end*, and finally *overcome* as well as fight, Rev. ii. 26. In a word, *that having set our hands to the plough, we should not look back*, Luke ix. 62. but that *we should be always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 58. The sense of all which is, that we should not only begin this our Christian warfare, and prosecute it for a while, but that we should proceed and persevere in it as long as we breathe, and never lay down our arms till we lay down our lives. In order to which, as we must still persevere in the practice of those duties which appertain to the course and progress of our warfare, so there are sundry other duties which we must practise, and which have a more direct and immediate influence upon the final success and consummation of it. All which I shall reduce to the following particulars:

1. That while we stand we should not be overconfident of ourselves, but still keep a jealous eye upon the weakness and inconstancy of our own natures.

2. That if at any time we wilfully fall and miscarry, we should immediately arise again by repentance.

3. That to prevent the like falls and miscarriages for the future, we should endeavour to withdraw our

affections from the temptations of the world, but more especially from those which were the occasions of our fall.

4. That we should more curiously search into the smaller defects and indecencies of our nature, in order to our reforming and correcting them.

5. That, so far as lawfully we can, we should live in a close communion with the church, whereof we are members.

6. That we should not, out of a fond opinion that we are good enough already, stint our progress in religion to any determinate degree or measure of goodness.

7. That we should frequently entertain ourselves with the prospect of our mortality, and endeavour to compose ourselves beforehand into a good posture of dying.

8. That, in order thereunto, we should be wondrous careful to discharge our consciences of all the relics and remains of our past guilt.

9. That to compensate for these, so far as we are able, we should take care to redeem the time we have formerly spent in sinful courses, by being doubly diligent in the exercise of all the contrary virtues, and the doing all the contrary good we are able.

10. That we should labour after a rational and well-grounded assurance of heaven.

I. To the perfection and consummation of our Christian warfare, it is necessary that while we stand, we should not be over-confident of ourselves, but still keep a jealous eye upon the weakness and inconstancy of our own natures. For thus the apostle declares it to be the will of God, that *we should not trust in ourselves*, i. e. rely too much upon our

own strength and ability, 2 Cor. i. 9. and elsewhere he admonishes, *Let him that thinks he stands* (or, the present being put for the future, as it is very frequently, *Let him that thinks he shall stand*) *take heed lest he fall*, 1 Cor. x. 12. so also Rom. xi. 20. *Thou standest by faith; be not highminded, but fear;* i. e. it is thy faith that upholds thee; but be not too secure of thy support, lest thou also fall and perish, as thy brethren the Jews have done before thee. And hence we are bid *to work out our salvation with fear and trembling*, Phil. ii. 12. i. e. with a holy solicitude and jealousy, lest one time or other we should be tempted and overcome, and at the last finally miscarry. And indeed there is nothing doth more expose men to the hazard of falling, than too much confidence in their own strength. This makes them venture upon a thousand temptations which they might have fairly, and much more prudently avoided; and hurries them hand over head into such inviting occasions and opportunities of sinning, as do too often inveigle and betray them, in despite of all their good resolutions to the contrary. Whereas, had they but suspected themselves, and not presumed too much upon their own steadfastness, they would many a time have kept out of harm's way, and avoided the snares that did entangle them: but by venturing, like Samson, to lay down their heads in a Delilah's lap, in confidence of the strength of their own resolution, they have been insensibly enticed, after some coy refusals, to betray themselves into the snare of the Devil.

And as through an overweening confidence of our own strength we expose ourselves to many needless temptations, so we do also too often provoke God

to withdraw his grace and assistance from us, and to leave us to contend alone with those temptations whereunto we do so confidently expose ourselves. For as he is always ready to assist us, so he always expects that we should acknowledge our need of and dependence upon him, and not presume too much upon our own strength, which, without his gracious concurrence, is weakness and impotence. When therefore without God's call and warrant we will needs rush into temptations, in confidence of our own ability to resist and conquer them, he many times leaves us without his aid and assistance, that so he may chastise our presumption, by permitting us to be defeated, and convince us, by the woful experiment of our fall, how unable we are to stand without his aid and support. It is our daily prayer that God would *not lead us into temptation;* but if for our trial he thinks meet to do so, we have all assurance, that if we be not wanting to ourselves, *he will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it,* 1 Cor. x. 13. But if we will lead ourselves into temptation, in confidence of our own ability to contend with and break through it, God is so far from being obliged to second us in our folly and unwarrantable rashness, that he is justly provoked by it to abandon us to ourselves, and, as a certain consequence of that, to permit us to be vanquished and led captive. Wherefore as we hope to persevere to the end, and to bring our warfare to a happy conclusion, it is highly necessary that we should always keep a jealous eye upon ourselves, and not confide too much in our own strength and ability.

II. To our final perseverance in the Christian warfare, it is also necessary, that if at any time we wilfully fall and miscarry in it, we should immediately arise again by repentance. For what is forbidden us as to one sin equally extends to all, *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath*, Eph. iv. 26. that is, if you have wilfully given the reins to your wrath, suffer it not to break forth into contumelious behaviour, but repent of it immediately, before the sun sets; according to that old practice of the Pythagoreans, mentioned by Plutarch, who, when at any time they fell into reproachful language out of anger, Τὰς δεξίας ἐμβάλλοντες ἀλλήλοις καὶ ἀσπαζόμενοι πρὶν ἢ τὸν ἥλιον δῦναι διλύοντο, i. e. before ever the sun set they always took care to be reconciled, and constantly shook hands with and embraced one another; and the reason of the prohibition, which you have in the next verse, viz. *neither give place to the Devil*, that is, by suffering your wrath to grow into inveterate malice, equally extends to all other sins, which if they be not immediately rooted out by repentance, will quickly improve into habits. So that we have as much reason to repent of our lust before the sun rises on it, and of our fraud and oppression before it hath run its course on it, as of our wrath before it goes down upon it. And consequently, by a parity of reason, the prohibition must extend to all other sins as well as this, and oblige us, whenever we have wilfully sinned in any particular, to revoke and expiate it by an immediate act of repentance.

For he that hath sinned wilfully, and not repented of it, doth all the while continue an obstinate rebel against God, and is so far from persevering in the

Christian warfare, that he is actually listed a volunteer in the adverse party. And if after we have thus sinned death should interpose between us and our repentance, (as who knows but it may, if we repent not immediately,) we shall be so far from consummating our Christian warfare in victory, that we shall die vassals to the Devil. But then, as by sinning wilfully we do desert God, so by continuing impenitent under it we still run farther and farther from him, and thereby make so wide a gap and interruption in our religious progress, as will not be easily repaired again; and whereas, had we repented and come back without delay, as soon as we had strayed from our duty, we might have soon recovered the ground we had lost by it, and by a little more diligence have gotten as far onward as if we had never interrupted our progress at all; by deferring our repentance we set ourselves farther and farther back, and shall every day be more and more indisposed to return. For in the course of our religion there is no standing still, but either we are progressive or retrograde, going backward or forward as long as we live; so that when once we are out of our way, we are still going farther out, till such time as we return again; and consequently the longer we are out, the harder it will be to return, and the farther we shall have to the end of our way. For when I first sin, and the wound of my innocence is yet green and fresh, it may easily be cured by the timely application of a sorrowful confession and new resolution of amendment; but if I neglect it, it will rot and putrify; my sense of it will be hardened, and my inclination to it grow every day more inveterate; and then, if it be not lanced and corroded by

a sharp, a long, and a painful repentance, it will turn into an incurable gangrene. Hence the apostle bids us *exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day*, that is, to *repent* while it is called to-day, *lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*, Heb. iii. 13. So that when we have wilfully sinned, we run a mighty hazard of our final perseverance, if we do not repent immediately. For all the while we delay, our conscience grows more seared, and our lust grows more confirmed, and God knows where it will end; but it is fearfully to be suspected, that that neglected bruise which we got by our fall will grow worse and worse, and determine at last in final impenitency. Wherefore as we intend to persevere in well-doing, it concerns us in the first place to take all possible care not to give way to any wilful sin, nor suffer ourselves by any hopes or fears to be tempted from our good resolution; but if at any time our wicked inclinations should prevail against it, to betake ourselves immediately to a serious repentance, to make a sorrowful confession of it to our offended God, and solemnly renew our resolution against it, that so we may stop the growing evil betime, before it is capable of endangering our final apostasy.

III. To our final perseverance, it is necessary that, to prevent the like falls and miscarriages for the future, we should endeavour to withdraw our affections from the temptations of the world, but more especially from those temptations which were the occasions of our fall. For thus we are strictly prohibited *to set our affections upon things on the earth*, Coloss. iii. 2. *to love the world, and the things that are in the world*, 1 John ii. 15. *to lay*

up for ourselves treasures upon earth, Matt. vi. 19. and it is the proper character of a true Christian *to be crucified to the world*, Gal. vi. 14. and to converse *as a stranger and a pilgrim in it*, Heb. xi. 13. As on the contrary, *to mind earthly things, and to be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*, are made the proper characters of infidels and apostates, Phil. iii. 19. compared with 2 Tim. ii. 4. And so inconsistent is an inordinate affection to the world with our perseverance in the Christian warfare, that St. James expressly tells us, *that the friendship of the world is enmity with God*, James iv. 4. and it is to the excess of our friendship to it that the scripture frequently attributes our apostasy, 2 Tim. iv. 10. And the apostle tells us, that *they that will be rich*, that is, immoderately covet to be so, *fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition*; and that *the love of money is the root of all evil*, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. From all which it is apparent how necessary it is, in the accounts of Christianity, in order to our perseverance, that we should endeavour to wean and abstract ourselves from the world.

For this world is the magazine of all those temptations by which our virtue and innocence is importuned and assaulted; and it is either the hope of some worldly pleasure, profit, or honour that allures, or the fear of some of the contrary evils which are incident to us in the course of religion that affrights us from our duty. Whilst therefore we immoderately love those goods and evils which are the solicitors of vice, we are in very great danger of being conquered and led captive by it. For it is not for

the sake of sinning that men sin, but for the sake of those goods, or to avoid those evils which are appendant to their sinning or not sinning: and consequently, the more a man loves those goods which cling and adhere to a sinful action, the more propense he will be to the commission of it; and the more he dreads those evils which he can most easily avoid by a sinful action, the more prone and inclinable he will be to it. Wherefore, to secure our perseverance in this warfare against sin, it is absolutely necessary that we rectify our opinion of the goods and evils of this world, and moderate and abate our affection towards them, especially towards those that have been most prevalent with us. For the temptation that prevails upon us discovers the weak side of our nature, and instructs the Devil what good or evil it is that is most apt to allure or affright us; and to be sure that subtle tempter, who hath been so many thousand years studying the arts of seducing us, will not fail to assault us again where he hath been already successful: and therefore it concerns us to fortify ourselves there, where we have so much reason to expect the enemy will assault us, and to rectify our opinions of, and mortify our affections to those things which have already so much imposed upon our virtue and innocence. For it is our imagination that gives life and efficacy to the charms and terrors of the world, and renders them so successful against us: we fancy that to be in them which is not, and so are affected, not so much with the things themselves, as with the false representations we make of them.

For it is plain the goods of the world are beholden to ourselves for the greatest part of those beauties

with which they tempt and allure us; and it is our fancy that gives the paint and fucus with which they charm and enamour our affections: and so for the evils of the world, it is our own imagination that disguises them into such bugs and scarecrows, and puts those ghastly visors on them with which they fright and amaze us. If therefore we would but take care to rectify our opinions of them both, and to strip them out of their imaginary terrors and allurements, we should thereby disarm them of their main strength, and render them much less able to seduce us for the future. And this, methinks, we might easily do, if we would but fairly represent to ourselves the present state and posture of our affairs. For we are a sort of beings that are every moment travelling from hence to an eternal world, where an unexpressible happiness or misery attends us; and all that we enjoy or suffer in this life is only the convenience or inconvenience of a short journey to a long home, but can have no other influence upon our everlasting condition, than as it is the occasion either of our virtue or vice, which are the only goods and evils that will accompany us to eternity, and make us happy or miserable there for ever. But as for poverty or riches, pain or pleasure, disgrace or reputation, they are things which probably within these ten or twenty years will be as perfectly indifferent to us as our last night's dream was when we awoke in the morning. And this, methinks, duly considered, were enough to render us very unconcerned at any good or evil that can happen to us here. For what a mighty matter is it, whether I fare well or ill for twenty or thirty years, who when that is expired must be happy or miserable for mil-

lions of millions of ages? and what will these little goods or evils signify to me, when my body is in the grave, and my soul in eternity? When I am stripped into a naked spirit, and set ashore upon the invisible world, then all these things will be as if they never were, and in the twinkling of an eye I shall lose sight of them for ever; and of all that I enjoyed or suffered in this life, I shall have nothing remaining but my virtue or vice, whose issues will prove my eternal happiness or misery. Doubtless, would we but accustom our minds to such reflections as these, they would effectually restrain us from the immoderate love or fear of the things of this world, and reduce us to a constant and efficacious persuasion, that there is no good in this world comparable to that of doing our duty, nor any evil incident to us in this life, that is not infinitely less formidable than sin. And when once our affection to this world, and our opinion of the goods and evils of it, are thus moderated and rectified, the temptations to sin will quite lose their hold of us, and be no more able to fasten upon our resolution. So that now we may pass safely through them whilst they are sparkling about us, there being no tinder in our breasts for them to catch fire and kindle upon. Now they will be no longer capable to allure or affright us, those bosom orators being silenced that were wont to contend for them, and to magnify their charms and terrors: and when we neither immoderately love nor fear them, it will be no hard matter to defend our virtue and innocence against all their assaults and importunities.

IV. To our final perseverance, it is necessary that we should more curiously search into the smaller defects and indecencies of our nature, in order to our

reforming and correcting them. Hence we are commanded *to hate even the garments spotted by the flesh*, Jude 23. i. e. to take care of the beginnings of sin, of any thing that hath the least spot or infection of it; and accordingly we are obliged, not only to take care to rub out the greater stains of our nature, but *to be diligent that we may be found of our Lord in peace without spot and blameless*, 2 Pet. iii. 14. i. e. to endeavour to reform those smaller and more indiscernible defects of our nature, which though they do not totally stain, yet very much spot and blemish it; that so at the coming of our Lord we may be found, not only sincere and upright, but, as near as may be, innocent and blameless. For so, Phil. ii. 15. we are bid to *be blameless, harmless, and without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation;* i. e. to endeavour so to demean ourselves in this world, as that we may appear, not only honest for the main, but, so near as is possible, spotless and unreprovable. And indeed there is nothing doth more frequently occasion men's final miscarriage in religion, than their not being careful and diligent in this matter. When they first enter into the Christian warfare, they very industriously set themselves against that course of wilful sin in which they formerly lived; and this were wondrous well, if they did not stop here, and go no farther; but, alas! in the mean time, while they are thus industriously busied in subduing their old sins, there are a great many lesser flaws and defects in their nature, which by a timely care and inspection they might easily correct: but these they take no notice of, but quietly permit them to grow and increase, till at last they become as hurtful and dangerous to

them as their old sins were, against which they have all this while so zealously contended. As, for instance, when they first entered upon a resolution of amendment, they were profane, it may be, or sensual, or vehemently addicted to fraud and oppression; and against these they opposed themselves with great zeal and animosity: and so far they did well: but in the mean time perhaps there was pride and ostentation, envy and peevishness, self-will and censoriousness, secretly budding and sprouting up in their natures; all which they might have easily cured by timely applications; but, alas! in the heat of their contest against their other sins, they never so much as minded or regarded these, but even let them alone, till they grew up into obstinate and inveterate habits, and became every whit as fatal and destructive to their souls, as those were which they have been all this while subduing and mortifying. So that, after all, they have only changed their sins, and have been conjuring up one devil while they have been laying another; and whilst the tide of their wickedness hath been ebbing on this shore, it hath been flowing on the contrary, and as it hath sunk in sensuality, it hath swelled into devilishness. Perhaps whilst you are zealously carrying on your warfare against your old sins, you may find yourselves too apt to be tickled with applause, and puffed with vain ostentation: have a care now, that while you are starving one vice, you do not pamper another. For if you do not correct this little irregularity of your nature betimes, it will soon be as dangerous and mischievous to you, as ever any of those vices were, against which you are contending; it will by degrees so insinuate into your good intentions, and so sophisticate the purity of

them, that at last you will intend nothing else but applause; and so your whole religion will be converted into dead show and empty pageantry, and your spiritual warfare will prove only a passage out of profaneness into hypocrisy. It may be, whilst you are contending against those fleshly inclinations by which you have formerly been captivated, your hearts will begin to swell with an overweening conceit of your own virtue and godliness, and, as a consequence of that, to entertain contemptuous and censorious thoughts of your brethren. Beware now, that whilst you are struggling with your old fleshly lusts, you do not overlook these little defects and indecencies of your nature; lest, whilst you are conquering one sort of sins, you be captivated by another. For if you do not take care to nip them in their buds, and to check these little essays and beginnings of them, they will soon spring up into habits of pride and insolence, rancour and uncharitableness; and so your warfare against sin will be only a transition from one evil into another, from the pollutions of the flesh into the pollutions of the spirit, and from the nature of beasts into the nature of devils. Wherefore, if you would be finally successful in the Christian warfare, you must take great care, that while you are contending with the grosser and more inveterate vices of your nature, you do not neglect its lesser defects and irregularities: for whilst they are lesser they may be easily corrected; but if they are not, they will soon grow greater, and, in the end, prove as dangerous as those you are now contending with. For every vice is small in the beginning, and easy to be cured; but if it be neglected, like a scratch in

the flesh, it will corrupt and rankle into a spreading gangrene.

V. To our perseverance to the end in this our Christian warfare, it is also necessary, that, so far as lawfully we can, we should live in close communion with the church whereof we are members. It is true, a particular church may be so corrupted, as that its members may be obliged to disunite themselves from it. For every man is obliged by virtue of his being in any society, not to agree to any thing which tends to the apparent ruin of it. Now the main end of Christian society being the honour of God and the salvation of souls, every man that enters into it is thereby obliged in his own station to advance this end; and consequently, as to join in all acts of the Christian society he is united to, so far as they tend thereunto, so to refuse all such acts of that society, if any such should be enjoined, as do apparently oppose, and are directly repugnant to it. So that if any act that is apparently sinful be enjoined by the particular church whereof I am a member, as a necessary condition of my communion with her, I am bound to abstain from it, for the sake of the general end of Christian society. As, for instance, suppose the church whereof I am a member require it as a condition of my communion, that I should transgress any just law of the commonwealth whereof I am a subject; in this case, I am bound rather to desert that church's communion, than live in wilful disobedience to the civil authority. And this is the case of those men, who, though they live in a Christian commonwealth, have been baptized into and bred up in the communion of particular congre-

gations, that, contrary to law, have separated themselves from the established, national church: for if in this national church there be nothing imposed on them, by the laws of the commonwealth, that is apparently contradictory to the laws of Christ, they are bound in conscience to desert those separate congregations, (allowing them to be true churches,) and to join themselves with the church national; and if they do not, they are wilful offenders against the law of Christ, which requires us to obey all human ordinances *for the Lord's sake.* And again, supposing one national church to be subject to another, that which is subject is bound to refuse the communion of that which is superior, if it cannot enjoy it without complying with impositions that are apparently sinful. Which is evidently the case between us and the church of Rome, supposing that *de jure* we were once her subjects and members: for had we been so, we should doubtless never have separated ourselves from her, could we but have separated her sins from her communion; could we have professed her creed without implicitly believing all her cheats and impostures, or submitted ourselves to her guides without apparent danger of being misled by them into the pit of destruction, or joined with her public services without worshipping of creatures, or received her sacraments without practising the grossest superstitions and idolatries. But when she had made it necessary for us either to sin with or separate from her, we could have no other honest remedy but only to withdraw; and if in this our separation there had been a sinful schism on either side, we could have appealed to heaven and earth whose the guilt of it was; theirs that forced us upon it, or ours that were

forced to it. But yet the case of our separation from the church of Rome is vastly different from that of the separation of private members from their own particular churches. For we affirm that the church of Rome is but a particular church, whose authority extends no farther than to its own native members, and consequently hath no more power to impose laws of communion upon us than we have upon her; our particular church being altogether as distinct and independent from her, as she is from ours. So that though the terms of communion she imposes upon her own members were all of them lawful and innocent, yet do they no more oblige us, as we are Christians of the Church of England, than the lawful commands of the great mogul do, as we are subjects of the kingdom of England.

But the case of private members, whether of ours or any other particular church, is vastly different. For if we will allow particular churches to be so many formed societies of Christians, (as we must do, or else degrade them into so many confused multitudes,) we must necessarily allow them to have a just authority (even as all other formed societies have) over their own members. And that they have so is evident, not only from the nature of the thing, but also from scripture, where the bishops and pastors of particular churches are said to be constituted by the Holy Ghost *overseers* of their particular flocks, Acts xx. 28. which word, both in sacred and profane writ, denotes a ruling power. And accordingly these overseers are elsewhere called *ruling elders*, 1 Tim. v. 17. and the subjects and members of their churches are required *to obey them, as those that have the rule over them*, Heb. xiii. 17. and else-

where the apostle exhorts them to *know*, i. e. submissively to own the authority of those that were *over them in the Lord*, 1 Thess. v. 12. By all which it is evident, that the members of particular churches are by divine institution subjected to the authority of their spiritual governors, and obliged in all things to obey them, wherein they are not countermanded by Christ himself. So that though one particular church may refuse the impositions of another, and that not only as they are sinful, but as they are impositions, because the other hath no lawful authority over it; yet it is by no means lawful for the subjects of any particular church to disobey their church-governors in any lawful matter; because being subjected to their authority by Christ, the supreme head of the church catholic, they are obliged to submit to them, as to his substitutes and vicegerents, in every thing which he hath not antecedently prohibited. And if, rather than do so, they shall choose to revolt from the communion of their church, they are schismatics, or, which is the same thing, they are rebels to Christ's authority in that particular church they revolt from. For what faction is in the state, that is schism in the church, viz. an unjust opposition to authority; the one to Christ's civil authority derived upon our magistrates, the other to his spiritual authority derived upon our bishops and ecclesiastical governors.

It is true, in some cases, as I hinted before, withdrawing from the communion of a church may be so far from being a rebellion against Christ, that it may be an act of duty and obedience to him; for where Christ, who is my supreme Lord, and my ecclesiastical governors, who are in authority under him, command things that are directly inconsistent, I am

doubtless bound to obey him rather than them; yea, though their commands are not inconsistent in themselves, yet if I am fully persuaded they are, it is all one to me. For when I do what I falsely believe Christ hath forbidden, I am in will as much a rebel against his authority, as when I do what I truly believe he hath forbidden. And so, by not complying with my spiritual governors out of an innocent mispersuasion that what they command is unlawful, I do formally, and in will, as much obey Christ in so doing, as if it were really unlawful. So that, in short, when the governors of the church whereof I am a member do impose, as the conditions of my communion, things that are either unlawful in themselves, or that, after due examination, I verily believe are unlawful, I am bound, in obedience to the authority of Christ, rather to desert that communion, than to comply with the terms and conditions of it.

But, since to desert the communion of a church is a matter of vast moment, (as I shall prove by and by,) it ought not to be done without the greatest caution and tenderness. For he that rejects sinful terms of communion, without just inquiry and sufficient examination, is formally as much a schismatic, i. e. he is as much a rebel in will to Christ's spiritual authority in his church-delegates and vicegerents, as he that rashly rejects innocent and lawful ones. For had it been only the sinfulness of the condition that displeased him, he would have made conscience, before he presumed to reject it, duly to inform himself whether it were sinful or no; but by thus rejecting it at a venture, without a due inquiry into the nature of it, he plainly shews that it was not so much the sin that displeased him, as the authority

that imposed it; and that it was not his conscience that took offence at it, but his humour; and consequently, that he would have had the same dislike of it, though it had been lawful and innocent. For conscience, being an act of the judgment and reason, cannot be offended without reason, either real or apparent; and without making a due inquiry into the nature of the thing we are offended at, we can have no reason that will either warrant or excuse our offence.

Now, to a due inquiry, it is necessary that we should impartially examine both sides of the question; and that while we are doing so, we should keep both our ears open to the matter in debate, and equally attend to what can be said for, as well as to what can be said against it; and then, that, upon a full hearing of both, we should determine, as near as we can, on which side the truth lies, without favour or affection. For he that inquires only what can be said against the matter he is offended at, doth thereby give a plain indication that he is resolved to be offended at it right or wrong; and that the end of his inquiry is not so much to satisfy his conscience, as to fortify his unreasonable prejudice. Wherefore, before we do reject the conditions of our church's communion as sinful, we are obliged, under the penalty of wilful schism, impartially to inquire what is to be said for as well as against them; and for this end to apply ourselves to our spiritual governors and pastors, and propose our doubts to them, and attend to their resolutions with an honest, teachable mind, that is willing to be informed; and where we are capable of judging, faithfully to peruse those books and arguments that make for the one side as

well as the other: for unless we do thus, it is plain that we are biassed by a factious inclination, and that we have a great mind to separate from the church's communion. For if we were not prejudiced against her authority by a schismatical temper of mind, we should be as forward at least to consult what may be said for her impositions, as what is said against them.

But then if the matters she imposes are such as a plain and illiterate communicant cannot judge of, nor comprehend the force of the reasons that make for or against them, such persons in such cases are obliged humbly to acquiesce in the church's authority, and not blindly to separate from her they know not why. As, for instance, suppose the matter imposed should be such a form of government, or such modes of discipline, or rights and circumstances of divine worship, as carry no such apparent evil in them, or express contradiction to any command of our Saviour, as to enable an illiterate Christian rationally to pronounce them unlawful; and whether they be unlawful or no, is not to be determined perhaps without some skill in the original languages, and the critical acceptations of phrases, or insight into ecclesiastical history, or metaphysical niceties and speculations; and it is by some of these that most of the controversies between us and our dissenting brethren are to be judged and decided. Now in such matters as these, where he cannot judge for himself, what should an unlearned communicant do? Why, this he knows well enough, that it is his duty in all lawful things to submit to the governors of his church, and reverence Christ's authority in them; but whether the abovenamed matters they impose be lawful or no, he

neither doth nor can know. So that if upon the score of those impositions he rejects the church's communion, he rejects it he knows not why; and to avoid doing that which he doth not know is a sin, he refuses to do that which he knows is a duty. So that, whether that which the church imposes be lawful or no, it is apparent rebellion in him to refuse it; because, for all that he knows, it is lawful; and though it should be unlawful, yet that cannot be the motive of his noncompliance with it, who doth not understand the reasons that make it so. He therefore that separates from the communion of the church, for causes that he cannot judge of, must necessarily separate without cause or reason; he can have neither true nor false pretence for his separation; because the arguments *pro* and *con* are beyond the sphere of his cognizance; and consequently, if he thereupon withdraw from the church's communion, it is not because he cannot comply with her sinful impositions, but because he will not submit to her just authority. Whereas by modestly submitting our judgment to the church's, in cases where we cannot judge for ourselves, we take an effectual course to secure our innocence. For though that which the church enjoins us should be materially sinful, yet to us who neither do nor can understand it to be so, it will be imputed only as an innocent error, because, by following the church's reason where our own cannot guide us, we take the best course we can not to be mistaken: and if we should be mistaken, we have this to excuse us, that it was by following an authority which God himself hath set over us; whereas, if we are mistaken on the other side, we are left altogether inexcusable.

But then there may be other conditions of church-communion, of whose unlawfulness a communicant may be very doubtful, though he be not confidently persuaded of it: and what is to be done in this case? To which I answer; first, that it is doubtless our duty not rashly to determine any thing to be false or unlawful which our spiritual governors have determined to be true or lawful. For we are bound by the law of Christian modesty to conclude, that they, having a larger prospect of things than we, and greater advantages of inquiring into them, are far more capable judges of what is true and lawful; and consequently, though we may possibly have some little probability that their opinion is false, or their command unlawful, yet we ought not to determine it so, unless it be in such plain and evident cases, as do not only outweigh the probability of their opinions, but the authority of them too. Wherefore, in cases of a doubtful nature, it is both modest and safe to subscribe to the judgment of our superiors; because, in so doing, we have not only our own ignorance to excuse, but their authority to warrant us: and if we should happen to be in the wrong through our modesty and humility, it will be safer for us than to be in the right through our pride and self-conceit. But perhaps the probability of our side may be so great, or at least seem so to us, that notwithstanding we give all due respect and deference to her authority, we cannot forbear doubting of the lawfulness of her conditions of communion. If so, then, secondly, it is to be considered, that it is as much our duty to obey her commands in things that are lawful, as not to obey them in things that are unlawful; and, therefore, if we only doubt whether her commands be law-

ful or no, our doubt ought to make us as fearful of disobeying, as it doth of obeying them, because the danger of sinning is on both sides equal. And therefore in this case, wherein I am necessitated to determine myself one way or the other, it is doubtless my duty to determine on that side which makes most for the church's security and peace, which, next to the honour of God and the salvation of souls, ought to be preferred above all things; and which consequently, if it be of any weight with me, must necessarily turn the scale of my choice, when it is before *in æquilibrio;* and whether to obey or disobey be most for the church's peace is very easy to be determined.

The sum of all therefore is this, that it is our duty to continue in strict obedience to and communion with that particular church whereof we are members, so long as it enjoins us nothing that is plainly and apparently sinful; that if either we cannot judge of the sinfulness or lawfulness of her conditions of communion, or do only doubt of their lawfulness, we are obliged to submit to her judgment and authority, and not to separate from her, till upon an impartial inquiry into the reasons of both sides we are fully convinced that they are sinful.

Now that this is an indispensable duty of our religion is evident, not only from the abovenamed scriptures, by which the bishops of particular churches are constituted the overseers and governors of them, and the subjects and members of those churches are required to yield them obedience; but also from those texts which forbid divisions in the particular churches; such as 1 Cor. i. 10. *I beseech you, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that there be no*

divisions among you; and which bid us *mark them that cause divisions among us, and avoid them,* Rom. xvi. 17. and also which schisms and divisions to be fruits of the flesh, as particularly 1 Cor. iii. 3. and St. Jude 19. and in a word, which requires us *to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,* Ephes. iv. 3. *to be of one mind,* 2 Cor. xiii. 11. and to *stand fast in one spirit, with one mind,* Phil. i. 27. all which was spoke to Christians, as they were members of particular churches, to oblige them by no means to dissent and separate from those churches, unless they were forced to it by just and manifest reasons: and methinks it is a most pathetical conjuration of the apostle, *If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, being of one accord, and of one mind,* Phil. ii. 1, 2. which exhortation he gives them, as they were a particular corporation of Christians under Epaphroditus, their head and bishop, by whom he sent this epistle to them. The sense of all which is, to oblige us not to disunite ourselves from the church of which we are members, so long as we are permitted to continue in her communion without doing any thing that is apparently unlawful. Or if we suppose those divisions which the apostle speaks of, and forbids, to be meant of factions within the church, without actual separation, then much more is separation, which is the highest faction and breach of unity, to be looked upon as wicked and unlawful. So that for men to separate from the church's communion upon little piques, uncertain scruples, and blind prejudices, is a very great and dangerous sin against the

gospel; it is a manifest violation of the laws of union, and an open rebellion against Christ's authority in his church. And being so, it is no wonder that in the purest ages of Christianity it was branded with such an infamous character. For thus in the thirty-first canon of the apostles, it is called *ambition* and *tyranny*, and condemned by Ignatius, the disciple of St. John, as the ἀρχὴ κακῶν, or original of evils, *Ep. ad Smyrn.* as a sin that shuts men out of the kingdom of heaven, *Ep. ad Philad.* and by the African code it is styled a destructive, sacrilegious sin, *Con. Carth.* &c. can. 100. and St. Cyprian makes it to be more heinous than the sin of the *Lapsi*, that offered sacrifice to idols to avoid persecution, and to be such a sin, as martyrdom itself would not expiate, *De Unit. Eccles.* and Dionysius Alexandrinus affirms, "That to suffer martyrdom, rather than make a schism in the church, "is as glorious an act as to die refusing to offer sacrifice to idols," *Euseb. Eccl. Hist.* lib. vi. And as they thus decry schism, so on the contrary they extol union, as the nurse of piety, the fence of religion, the quintessence and extract of all Christian virtue.

And indeed it is to the unity of the members of the church among themselves, that the scripture attributes their growth and improvement in piety and virtue. For thus the apostle tells us, not only that *charity* (or a mutual agreement among church-members) *edifies*, 1 Cor. viii. 1. but also assures us, that the whole church or collection of members become an *holy temple*, and *an habitation of God*, by being συναρμολογουμένη, *compacted*, and closely united together in all its parts, Eph. ii. 21, 22. and Eph. iv.

16. he tells us, that the church *increases or improves unto the edifying itself in love, by being closely compacted and united in all its parts and members;* and Col. ii. 19. he tells us, that it is not only from its union with Christ, and those nourishing influences that are thereby conveyed from him, that the church *increases with the increase of God*, but also from its being knit together, or firmly united in all its parts. And if union be so necessary to the growth and perfection of the church, it can be no less necessary to the improvement of each particular member of it. For,

1. Schisms and unnecessary breaches of church-communion do naturally sour the tempers of men, and render them peevish and uncharitable towards one another. For the separating party must in their own vindication be forced to accuse those they separate from of something that may be foul enough to justify their separation, and what they want in reality they must make up in pretence, otherwise they will be looked upon as peevish and obstinate schismatics; and then the party they separate from will be sure to deem itself injured, and in its own defence be forced to recriminate; and this will alarm the separatists into greater heats and animosities: and so, like two flints dashed together, they will be continually sparkling and spitting fire at one another, till they have kindled the quarrel into an inquenchable flame. Whereas had the dividers but continued their communion, all this might have been prevented, and they might have easily continued their charity, though they had retained the opinions upon which they separated. For had they but exercised that modesty and goodness, as not to prefer

their own private sentiments before the reason and peace of the whole church, they would either have kept their opinions to themselves, or at least not have advanced them into principles of separation; and so by continuing in communion with that party of the church from whence they dissented in opinion, they would have declared that they judged their errors to be tolerable. For by not separating from them, they would have plainly manifested that they saw reason enough to unite upon the score of those points in which they were agreed, but none to disunite upon the score of these in which they differed; and consequently, that they had a great deal of reason to love, but none to hate and persecute one another; and whilst they mutually retained this good opinion of one another, it is very unlikely that their little differences should cause any great breaches in their charity. Schism therefore being so destructive to our charity, which is one of the leading virtues of our religion, must needs have a very malevolent aspect upon our perseverance. For he that from a charitable temper relapses into a spiteful and rancorous one, is apostatized from one half of the religion of a Christian, and hath exchanged one of the fairest graces of a saint, for one of the blackest characters of a devil. But then,

2. Schisms, or unnecessary breaches of church-communion, do naturally lead to the foulest hypocrisies. For he that separates from a church is a very bad man, if he hath not a great opinion of and zeal for those things upon which he separates; which zeal of his, when once he is actually separated, will be much more inflamed, and that both by the opposition of the church he is separated from, and

the instigation of the sect he is separated to; and so by degrees that holy fervour which should animate him in the plain and unquestionable duties of religion, will blaze into a fierce contention for those little opinions that constitute the sect he is engaged in. For our nature being finite and limited in all its operations, it is impossible we should operate divers ways at once with equal force and vigour; but whatsoever time and attendance we bestow upon one thing, we must necessarily substract from another. Now whilst we continue in a peaceable communion with the church, we have no other use for our zeal, but to inspire our devotions, to quicken our virtues, and to fight against our sins with it; and this, all men agree, is the best use it can be put to: but when once we are entered into a schismatical separation, we shall find other employment for it; namely, to quarrel at ecclesiastical constitutions, to wrangle about modes and circumstances of worship, and contend for our trifling speculations and opinions; which must necessarily weaken it in its nobler operations, and render it more remiss and indifferent in the great and indispensable duties of religion: and whilst it is thus impertinently busied in picking straws, and contending about mint and cummin, to be sure it must more or less neglect the great and weighty things of the law; and so proportionably as it grows warmer and warmer about little opinions and circumstances of religion, it will be continually waxing cooler and cooler in the necessary and essential duties of it; till at last it is wholly degenerated into peevishness and faction, and dwindled away into a fierce contention about trifles. That this is the natural effect of schism appears by too

many woful experiments. For how many instances of men are there among ourselves, who had once an honest zeal for the life and substance of religion, and made great conscience of *living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,* but afterwards becoming bigots to such a sect or party, have diverted the stream of their zeal into another channel, where its irregular current hath only made a noise, and filled the world with a loud and turbulent clamour about little things, but as to those great and important duties upon which their happiness depends, hath been profoundly mute and indifferent: and so their religion, like an hectic body, hath by degrees been consumed by its own heats, whilst that zeal and fervour which should move and animate it hath been converted into its disease, and wholly evaporated into faction and turbulency: and whilst their zeal is thus misemployed about the little trifles of their sect, and they are ready to start at an innocent ceremony, and to swoon at the sight of an indifferent mode and appendage of religion, as if they were afraid lest it should infect them at a distance, they can swallow camels though they strain at these gnats, and glibly digest the grossest immoralities.

3. And lastly, schisms and unnecessary breaches of church-communion do naturally lead to downright irreligion. For when once a man departeth from an established church without a just warrant, there is nothing can confine or set shores to him; he hath no principles that can stay him any where, or set any measures of changing to him. For when upon a mere humour or fancy he hath run from the church to such a sect, what should hinder him from run-

ning from that sect to another, and so on from sect to sect, till he hath run himself out of all religion? He is rolling down a steep hill, and hath no principles to stay him; so that it is impossible to determine whither he will go, or where he will stop. He may perhaps stay at such an opinion; but if he doth, it is by chance; and if he doth not, he will be endlessly rolling from one opinion to another, and shifting his church as often as his almanack. For schism is a large labyrinth, that naturally divides and subdivides into infinite paths and alleys, wherein a man may wander to eternity, and the farther he goes, the more he may lose himself: and then, when he hath wandered a while out of one wild opinion into another, and still perceives that the farther he goes the more he is dissatisfied, it is a thousand to one if he doth not at last suspect and question all religion, as if the whole were an intricate maze of absurd or doubtful opinions, contrived on purpose to amuse men's minds, and entangle them in endless perplexities. For the schismatic, as I shewed before, doth commonly place a great part of his religion in that opinion upon which he divides and separates; so that if once he be dissatisfied with this, as in all probability he will quickly be, having begun already to ring changes, he will be under a great temptation to mistrust the whole religion to be as great an imposture as he finds this darling opinion is, especially after he hath run through several sets of opinions, and finds them at last to be all delusions. For as weak heads when they perceive the battlements shake are apt to suspect that the foundations are infirm; so weak understandings will be ready to suspect even the fundamental principles of religion, when once they

perceive those darling notions totter which they have confidently presumed to superstruct upon it. Upon this account therefore I make no doubt, but that the atheism of this present age is very much owing to its sects and divisions. For how many woful examples have we of persons, who had once a great deal of zeal for and satisfaction in religion, that upon their causeless defection from the church's communion have run from sect to sect, and from one extravagant opinion to another, till being at last convinced of the cheats and impostures of them all, they have discarded religion itself, and made their last resort into atheism and infidelity. Since therefore schism hath so many mischiefs attending it, and such as do manifestly endanger our perseverance in religion, it highly concerns us, as we would hold out to the end in the course of our Christian warfare, to keep close to the communion of the church.

VI. To our final perseverance in the Christian warfare, it is also necessary that we should not stint our progress in religion (out of a fond opinion that we are good enough already) to any determinate degrees or measures of goodness. For thus we are enjoined not only to *have grace*, but still to be *growing in it*, 2 Pet. iii. 18. and not only to *do the work of the Lord*, but to *abound in the doing it*, 1 Cor. xv. 58. and not only to *walk in all well-pleasing to God*, but *to abound in so doing more and more*, 1 Thess. iv. 1. *to forget what is behind*, i. e. the degrees of virtue and goodness we have already attained, and to be still *pressing forward to the mark of our high calling*, Phil. iii. 13, 14. The sense of all which is, that we should not limit ourselves to our present attainments, out of a slothful opinion that we are good

enough already, but that we should still be proceeding on to farther and farther degrees of perfection. For holiness is every where enjoined in the gospel in unlimited and indefinite measures, and our progress in it had no other boundary than the farthermost degree of possible perfection. An injunction which will keep us for ever sufficiently employed, and oblige us to eternity to be still aspiring beyond our present attainments; and the neglect of this is doubtless the occasion of many a man's final miscarriage. They aim at no more than what is absolutely necessary to remove them from the brink of eternal perdition; and if they can but so far prevail against their sin, as to arrive at the lowermost degree of sincere obedience, and but just pass the line which separates between a bad and good state, that so if they die as they are they may hope to escape hell, and arrive at some degree of happiness, they think they have very fairly acquitted themselves. But now, besides that line which parts those two states of sin and grace is not so easily discernible but that you may very probably be deceived, and imagine that you are got over it into the state of grace, whilst you are yet upon the frontiers of the dominion of sin, and so may perish at last at the very mouth of your harbour; besides that it is a fearful sign that you are *yet in your sins*, that you design no farther but just to escape that everlasting ruin that attends them, which plainly shews that the fear of hell is the soul of your religion, and that there is not the least degree of true love to God intermingled with it, without which your religion will be altogether insignificant; besides all this, I say, while you rest in such an imperfect state of goodness, you dwell in the next

neighbourhood to a sinful state, and so are in continual danger of returning thither again. For how is it possible you should be safe, while you stay upon the brink of that miserable state out of which you are but just emerged and recovered, and have so many strong inclinations within you, concurring with the numberless temptations without you, to thrust you headlong back again into it? So that if you would be secure, it is not sufficient for you just to get out of your sinful state, and stay there, but you must still be removing farther and farther from it, by proceeding on still to farther degrees of perfection. For you must consider that there is a vast distance between a state of sincere and of confirmed goodness, and that all the while you are passing on from the one to the other, you are more or less in danger of relapsing. For you have been sincerely good, ever since your first entrance into a firm and hearty resolution of amendment; but, alas! since that, how many times have you been in danger of relapsing into your old sinful courses again! What strong contentions have there been between your flesh and your spirit, your bad inclinations and your pious resolutions! And though the latter hath been most commonly victorious, yet how often hath it been yielding, yea, how often hath it been vanquished! Insomuch, that if you had not by a quick repentance revived it immediately, it had been dead long since, and you had been as much enslaved to your lusts as ever. And from these dangers you will never be wholly free, till you have utterly extinguished your vicious inclinations, and inwrought all the virtues of religion into your natures; and then you will be arrived to that confirmed state of good-

ness, from which it will be morally impossible for you to revolt. If therefore you would secure your perseverance to the end, beware you do not limit yourselves in the way; for though if you die but just sincerely good, you shall certainly escape hell; yet in all probability you will not be long sincerely good, unless you be something more; that is, unless you proceed in the degrees of virtue, and do more and more suppress your evil and improve your good dispositions and inclinations. For so long as there remains in you any lust to evil, you will be in danger of being betrayed by it; and the stronger that lust is, the more it threatens your destruction. So that you can never be safe, so long as you have an enemy alive in your breast; and whilst you rest in any attainment on this side the confirmed state of virtue, in which there is an utter extinction of all evil inclinations, you are more or less in danger, proportionably as you are more or less distant from that happy period.

VII. To our final perseverance, it is also necessary that we should frequently entertain ourselves with the prospect of our mortality, and endeavour to compose ourselves beforehand into a good posture of dying. For thus we are called upon in this our militant state, *to consider our latter end*, Deut. xxxii. 29. and by the examples of the best men are invited *to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*, Psalm xc. 12. *and to wait till our change comes*, Job xiv. 14. to which end we are put in mind, that *here we have no abiding city*, Heb. xiii. 14. and *that it is appointed for all men once to die*, Heb. ix. 27. and *that our life is even as a vapour, that appears for a little time, and then va-*

nishes away, James iv. 14. and to this purpose the apostle applies this consideration, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. Now *this I say, brethren*, that is, of our abode and continuance here, (upon which he exhorts us to compose ourselves to a great indifferency as to the things of this world,) *it remains that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passes away:* i. e. Since your time is here very short, endeavour beforehand to loosen yourselves from this world, and to put yourselves into a fit posture of leaving it; for it is but a short scene that will quickly be shifted, and then there will an eternal state of things succeed.

And indeed, since to die well is the last act and final consummation of our Christian warfare, it must needs highly concern us to arm and prepare ourselves for it beforehand, lest we lose the blessed prize, by stumbling just at the goal, and after a long voyage miscarry for ever within sight of harbour. For in the hour of death, we throw our last cast for an eternity of happiness or misery; and how much we are concerned to throw that well, upon which so vast a stake depends! O it is a serious thing to die; to pass this dark entry of eternity, through which, as we go, right or wrong, we are made or undone for ever. For to carry us right through, it is not a few death-bed sorrows or good wishes, a few extorted promises or forced resolutions, or frightful prayers, or "Lord have mercy upon us," will serve the turn; O no! it is an expensive passage, which we shall

never be able to defray, unless we carry along with us a large stock of spiritual preparations. We shall have need of a strong and active faith; of a mind well furnished with wise considerations; of a deep, a large, and a tried repentance; an unrestrained charity; a confirmed patience; a profound submission to the will of God; and a well-grounded hope of a blessed eternity. For without all these together, we shall be very ill-accoutred to die, and run a dreadful hazard of miscarrying for ever. And these are such things as do not usually spring up like mushrooms in a night, or in the few disturbed moments of a dying time, but do ask a much larger and serener season to grow and ripen in. So that if we mean to die well, and so come off victoriously in this last act of our spiritual warfare, we must now, while we are well, be frequently entertaining our meditations in the charnel-house, and read lectures to ourselves upon the skeletons and death-heads there, those emblems and representations of our approaching mortality; and from them take such lively pictures of the king of terrors, as may render his grim visage and fearful addresses so familiar to us, as that our thoughts may be beforehand accustomed to the manner of his approaches; with what an army of diseases he is wont to lay siege to the fort of our life; how, in despite of all the resistances of nature, he plants and quarters them in our veins or our arteries, our stomachs or our bowels, and from thence infests us all over with continual anguish and pain; how, when he hath tired and exhausted us with his continued batteries, and worn out our strength with a succession of wearisome nights to sorrowful days, he at last storms the soul out of all the outworks of

nature, and forces it to retire into the heart; and how, when he hath marked us for dead with a baptism of clammy and fatal sweats, he summons our weeping friends to assist him, to grieve and vex us with their parting kisses and sorrowful adieus; and how at length, when he is weary of tormenting us any more, he rushes into our hearts, and with a few mortal pangs and convulsions tears the soul from thence, and turns it out to seek its fortune in the wide world of spirits; where it is either seized on by devils, and carried away to their dark prisons of sorrow and despair, there to languish out its life in a dismal expectation of that dreadful day, wherein it must change its bad condition for a worse; or be conducted by angels to some blessed abode, there to remain in unspeakable pleasure and tranquillity, till it is crowned with a glorious resurrection. Now since it is most certain that we must all one time or other experience these things, but most uncertain how soon; how much doth it concern us to think of them beforehand, and to forecast such provisions and preparations for them, as that whensoever they happen, we may not be surprised. For besides that the frequent meditation of death will familiarize its terrors to us, so that whenever it comes, our minds, which have been so long accustomed to converse with it, will be much less startled and amazed at it; besides that it will wean us from the inordinate desire and over eager prosecution of the things of this world, which, as I told you before, are the snares with which our vices do too often entangle us; besides all this, I say, it will put us upon laying in a store of spiritual provisions against that great day of expense. For he that often considers the dreadful

approaches, the concomitant terrors, and the momentous issues and consequents of death, must be strangely stupified, if he be not thereby vigorously excited to forearm and fortify himself with all those graces and defences that are necessary to render it easy, safe, and prosperous.

VIII. To our final perseverance in the Christian warfare, it is also necessary, that in order to the putting ourselves into a good posture to die, we should discharge our consciences of all the relics and remains of our past guilt: for so we are commanded to take care *that our hearts be sprinkled from an evil conscience*, Heb. x. 22. and *to hold faith and a good conscience*, 1 Tim. i. 19. and *to make this our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world*, 2 Cor. i. 12. in a word, *to live in all good conscience*, Acts xxiii. 1. and *to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men*, Acts xxiv. 16. which, though they are general duties, do necessarily imply this particular, that we should very nicely and curiously examine our consciences, those faithful records and registers of our actions, and wherever we find the least item of an uncancelled guilt, immediately cross it out by a hearty sorrow for, and moral revocation of it. For notwithstanding we may have in the general repented of all our past sins; yet there are some sins, which notwithstanding we react no more, do leave a lasting guilt upon the mind, which nothing can cancel but our actual revoking and unsinning them. As supposing that I have heretofore, either by my bad counsels or example, seduced other men into wicked courses; it is not sufficient for the expiation of my

fault, that I myself abstain from those wicked courses for the future, but I must endeavour to undo the mischief which I have done to others by them, and by a solemn recantation of my past follies, by persuasion and good counsel, and the application of all other pious and prudent means, endeavour to reduce those whom I have formerly perverted. For till I have done this, I wilfully permit the mischievous effect of my sin to remain; and if when I have wounded another, I suffer him to perish, without taking any care of his cure, I am guilty of his murder, though I never wound him more. Suppose again, that I have injured another by any malicious slander or calumny; it is not enough to acquit me of the guilt of it, that I cease to scandalize him for the future, but I must also endeavour, by a free retractation, to vindicate his injured name from the ill surmises of those to whom I have aspersed him: for so long as his reputation suffers through my not retracting the calumnies I have cast upon it, I wilfully persist to defame and calumniate him, and so long the guilt of it must stick and abide upon my conscience. Once more; suppose I have injured another in his estate, either by theft, or fraud, or oppression, it will not be sufficient to acquit me, that for the future I forbear defrauding, forcing, or stealing from him any more; but, if it be in my power, I must make restitution of all that I have wrongfully deprived him of; and that to himself, if he be living, or if not, to those that succeed him in his rights; and for want of such, to the poor, who by God's donation have the propriety of all such wefts and strays as have no other owner surviving. For it is certain that my wrongful seizure of what is another man's

doth not alienate his right to it; so that he hath the same right to it while I keep it from him, as he had at first when I took it from him; and consequently, till I restore it back to him, I continue to wrong him of it; and my detaining it is a continued repetition of that fraud, or theft, or oppression, by which I wrongfully seized it: and whilst I thus continue the sin, it is impossible but the guilt of it must still abide upon me. In these cases therefore it concerns us to be very nice and curious in examining our accounts, to see if there be any of these scores yet uncancelled, any of these bad effects of our sin yet remaining: for if any such matter appear in our accounts, it concerns us as much as our everlasting interest amounts to, to use all present care and diligence to discharge it, that so before death summons us to give up our accounts to the great Auditor of the world, all scores between him and us may be evened and adjusted. And indeed if we would be safe, it vastly imports us to leave as little as may be to do upon a death-bed; for that is most commonly a very improper state for religious action; since, for all we know, we may be distracted in it by a fever, or stupified by an apoplexy, or deprived of the use of reason by the insufferable torments of a stone; either of which will render us incapable of every thing but dying. Or if neither of these should happen, yet to be sure a dying state will bring work enough with it; sorrows and care enough, fears and impatiencies enough to exercise all our virtue, and employ all our reason. So that if we carry with us to our death-bed any item or relic of uncancelled guilt, it is a thousand to one but in the hurry of dying we shall leave it uncancelled, and be arrested for it by the divine justice

when we come into eternity. Wherefore, as we would prevent this fatal issue of our Christian warfare, it concerns us now we are well to make a diligent inspection into our consciences, to see if there yet remains any old reckonings of guilt undischarged by us; and if there be, *not to give rest to our eyes, nor slumber to our eyelids*, till by an actual unsinning and revocation of the facts, we have totally crossed and discharged them. But then, because many of these may slip out of our mind, and so be past recovery,

IX. To the happy conclusion of this our Christian warfare, it is also necessary, that, to compensate, so far as we are able, for these relics of guilt in us, we should take care to redeem the time we have formerly misspent in sinful courses, by being doubly diligent in the exercise of all the contrary virtues, and the doing all the contrary good we are able: for of all the outward blessings that God affords us, our time is incomparably the most precious and inestimable; and therefore, though he gives us his other blessings in great variety, and provides for us a plentiful choice of meats, drinks, and raiment, yet in the distribution of our time he seems to be more sparing and straithanded; for he gives it not to us in rivers, but drop by drop, and minute after minute, so that we can never enjoy two moments together, but, whenever he gives us one, he always takes away another. And yet, good God! what waste do we make of these precious drops of which thou art so nice and sparing! How great a part of it do we consume in our childhood upon the indifferent vanities of nuts and rattles, and afterwards upon the much more ridiculous and unreasonable ones of our vicious, pro-

fuse, and extravagant appetites! So that by that time we come to a serious prosecution of the great end of our beings, the main part of our time is usually elapsed beyond revocation. How much therefore doth it concern us, after we have so prodigally squandered away the greatest part of the treasure of our time, to make the best improvement of the small remainder; that so we may at least morally recover that which is physically irrecoverable: for though we cannot cause the past minutes we have ill-spent to be present again, yet we can redouble our diligence for the future, and thereby render every one minute to come equivalent to every two that are past: for by a double diligence we may live as much in one day, as we can in two by a single; and consequently, by doubly improving that part of our time which is yet good and to come, we may morally retrieve that part which is lost and gone.

This therefore the gospel requires at our hands, that, after we have lived out a great part of our time to no purpose, we should from thenceforth live much in a little while, and retrieve our past negligence by our future diligence, and redeem the time we have spent upon our lusts, by exerting the contrary virtues more vigorously for the future; that the more profane we have been for the time past, the more devout we should be for the time to come; that the more we have abounded heretofore in frauds and oppressions, the more we should abound hereafter in charity and alms; that the more industrious we have been to seduce and debauch men, the more zealous we should be to reduce and reclaim them; and by our future candour, and charitable construction of men, endeavour to compensate for the malice of our

past slanders and defamations. Thus Ephes. iv. 28. *Let him that stole steal no more;* aye, but that is not enough; but he must also endeavour to redeem his past thefts by a more vigorous exercise of the contrary virtue for the future; *but rather let him labour, working with his own hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs.* So also Dan. iv. 27. *Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor;* i. e. Whereas, for the time past, the course of thy life hath very much abounded with cruelty and injustice, do thou now endeavour to redeem the guilt of it, (for so the Hebrew verb signifies,) by exerting more vigorously the contrary virtues, viz. of justice to all, and of mercy to the poor and afflicted. And to this purpose St. Paul's example is proposed to our imitation, who, because for the time past he had been a great persecutor of Christianity, did for the future labour *more abundantly* than any other apostle to advance and propagate it, 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10. The observance of which rule is highly necessary to the reducing this our warfare to a prosperous issue: for, as I told you before, there are many sins, which, after we have forsaken the practice of them, do stick such a guilt upon the conscience, as without our undoing them, so far as we are able, is not to be wiped off; such as wicked counsel, malicious detraction, and unjust gain: all which we are bound, so far as it is in our power, not only to avoid, but actually to revoke. But, alas! there are many of these which in a long course of sin are utterly forgotten by us, and consequently are past revocation; and in this case all we can do, to take off the guilt of them, is, in the general course of our lives to abound in the practice

of the contrary virtues, and to do the utmost service we are able to the souls and good names and bodies of men. For *charity*, saith the apostle, *shall cover a multitude of sins*, 1 Pet. iv. 8. that is, when it appears by the abundance of our charity that we would abolish and repair all the injuries we have done, if it were in our power, God in this case will accept the will for the deed, and deal as mercifully by us as if we had actually done it. For if it appear in his sight that we would do it if we could, we are in his account as truly obedient to him, as if we had actually performed it, and consequently shall be dealt with by the same proportions of mercy. But it is only an extraordinary charity that can evidence this; since what is ordinary we are obliged to, though we had no past injuries to abolish; but to insure our reconciliation with God, it is requisite that we should evidence to him our sincere willingness to do, not only what we should have been obliged to, if we had not been injurious, but also what we are obliged to since we have been injurious. Now as actual reparation, so far as we are able, is necessary to evidence this, when we remember the injuries we have done, so an extraordinary charity is no less necessary to evidence this, when we have forgotten them. And this I suppose is the meaning of that parallel passage of St. James, chap. v. 20. *He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins;* i. e. by such an illustrious act of charity to the soul of his brother, he shall obtain pardon of God for many of those forgotten injuries which he hath formerly done, and is now no otherwise able to repair. So that if we would make sure

work of our Christian warfare, and ascertain its being finally crowned with success; as in general we must endeavour to redeem the past time we have spent in vicious courses, by abounding in the practice of the contrary virtues; so in particular, if for the time past we have lived in any of those injurious courses which do naturally fix a more lasting guilt upon the mind, we must take care not only to repair, so far as we are able, those injuries we remember, but also to wipe off the guilt of those we have forgotten, by an extraordinary charity and beneficence, by laying hold of all opportunities to do good, and endeavouring in our several stations, according as God hath enabled us, to reduce the souls, relieve the bodies, and vindicate the reputation of our brethren.

X. And lastly, to our final perseverance in well-doing, it is also necessary that we should labour after a rational and well-grounded assurance of heaven. I put this in the last place, because it is usually the last attained, and is not to be presently expected and catched at, as soon as we are entered into a religious state. For there are a great many stages of religion to be passed, before we can modestly expect to arrive at assurance. In the beginning of our religion, when we are just recovered out of a vicious state, we cannot but be sensible, if we do at all understand ourselves, that we are as yet in a great deal of danger, and do border so very near upon that bad state we are escaped from, that it is almost impossible to distinguish whether we are in or out of it. For though we are fully purposed and resolved against it, yet we cannot well divine what will be the issue of it. Our resolution is yet so

young, so raw and unexperienced, and besieged with so many powerful counterstriving inclinations, that we cannot confide in it without great folly and presumption. For till sufficient trial hath been made of it, for all that we know, it may prove to be only a godly mood, or a short lucid interval between the raving fits of our lust and extravagant affections, which in a few days perhaps may return again, and utterly alienate and distract us from all our sober counsels and purposes. And if it should so happen, that which we now look upon as our cure and recovery will prove but an intermission of our disease. And when for some time we have tried our resolution, and found that it hath bravely resisted those temptations that have hitherto assaulted it, yet we cannot presently be reasonably assured of it, considering the fickleness and inconstancy of our nature. For it may be, it hath not been yet assaulted on the weak side, or it hath not been nicked with a seasonable temptation, or it may be, we may be more remiss and careless another time, or more vehemently inclined to a vicious compliance; and then those temptations which we have hitherto conquered may captivate and subdue us. And if it thus happen, that which we now look upon as an everlasting breach between us and our lusts may prove only a pet or short distaste, and, like the falling out of lovers, end in the renewing of love. And till we have made some considerable progress in the mortification of our sinful inclinations, and the acquisition of their contrary habits, our religion will have so many flaws, defects, and imperfections in it, as will give us great reason, if we have any modesty in us, to be very fearful and jealous of it. But since

without sincerity in religion we can have no title to heaven, it hence follows, that without a clear sense of our sincerity we can have no assurance of our title to it; and such a clear sense as is necessary to found such an assurance on is not to be acquired, you see, without a thorough trial of our resolution in a long and vigorous course of religion. So that for men to be immediately snatching at assurance, as soon as ever they are entered into a good life, argues them not to be so sensible as they should be of their own imperfection and frailty; they ought in modesty to expect a while, and not conclude too soon for themselves, till they have made a through trial of their resolution; and in the mean time to strive on, in hope that by the blessing of God concurring with their endeavours, they shall at last attain such a certain sense and feeling of their own sincerity, as will be sufficient to infer a firm and rational assurance. For assurance being the top of Christian attainment, we must ascend to it gradually, by the intermediate staves and rounds of a tried and lasting obedience, and not leap up in an instant, before we have taken all the steps and degrees that lead thither.

But though we ought not to be too forward in our assurance, yet we are bound to labour after it in a due and regular way; that is, to persist in our obedience till we have reduced our inward and outward motions to such a degree of conformity to the standard of the gospel, as that upon comparing ourselves with it we may be able, without flattery or presumption, to conclude our own sincerity and uprightness. I know there is a much shorter passage to assurance, which some of late have pretended to;

and that is, by certain unaccountable incomes and manifestations of God's Spirit, who, as they pretend, doth immediately whisper and reveal to them their title and interest in heaven. But this, alas! is too much like the north-east passage to the Indies; which is shorter indeed, if it could be found, but so very dangerous, that I doubt there are but few that attempt it but miscarry; and it is well if they do not finally perish in the discovery. Not that I do in the least doubt but God doth many times suggest and whisper unspeakable comforts and assurances to the minds of good men; but then it is to be considered, that this is an arbitrarious gift, which he seldom if ever bestows but in extraordinary cases, when it is necessary to encourage us to some great work, or to support us under some extraordinary suffering. For he is a wise and careful Father of his children, and knows it is much more necessary for us to be good, than to be ravished and transported, and that such high cordials are neither proper nor safe for us but in great extremities; and therefore for us to expect that he should make them our ordinary food and entertainment is an argument of our childish ignorance and presumption. But though such immediate whispers and revelations may serve to good purposes in a pinch of extremity, yet are they by no means to be built upon as the foundations of our ordinary, standing assurance. For so long as there is an evil spirit without, and a disordered fancy within us, that can imitate these whispers, we shall be continually liable, so long as we put confidence in them, to all the cheats and impostures of natural and diabolical enthusiasm, and unavoidably mistake many an injection of the Devil, and many a warm flush of

fancy, or brisk fermentation of melancholy humour, for a whisper and testimony of the Spirit of God, and by this means be often lulled into false confidences and assurances, which, like golden dreams, will vanish when we awake, and leave us miserably disappointed. That assurance therefore which we are to aim at must be founded in the testimony of a good conscience, and inferred from the sense of our own integrity and uprightness.

And this we are commanded to endeavour after; so, Heb. x. 22. we are bid *to draw near unto God,* ἐν πληροφορίᾳ πίστεως, in *confidence,* or *full assurance of faith,* that is, in a firm persuasion of God's love to us, and our interest in his promises; which persuasion is to be founded upon an inward sense of our having *our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water;* and accordingly, Heb. vi. 11. *to be diligent in good works, to the full assurance of hope unto the end,* i. e. to be so diligent in our duty as that we may thereby acquire such a full assurance of our reward as may enable us to continue and hold out to the end. For St. John tells us, that it is by the integrity of our virtue, and particularly of our love to one another, that we are *to assure our hearts before God,* 1 John iii. 14, 19. for, saith he, verse 21. *If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God;* and for this purpose among others, the same apostle tells us, he wrote this catholic epistle, that true Christians might *know and be assured that they had eternal life,* 1 John v. 13.

From all which it is evident, that it is our duty to labour after such an assurance of heaven, as naturally ariseth from the clear and certain sense of our

sincerity towards God, and the firm belief of the promise of eternal life, to which our sincerity entitles us. For when we are so far improved in religion, as that upon an impartial survey of ourselves we can feel our own integrity, and sensibly perceive that our intention is pure, our resolution fixed, and our heart entirely devoted to God, we may from thence most certainly infer our title and interest to the promise of heaven. So that to the obtaining this assurance, all that we have to do is, so far to purify our intentions from sinister aims, and subdue our bad inclination to our resolution and obedience, as that whenever we reflect upon and compare ourselves with the rule, our conscience may be able without any diffidence to pronounce us sincere; and then we may as certainly conclude our interest in heaven, as we can that God's promises are true: and if after we are thus far improved in religion, we still remain unassured, it proceeds not from the want of sufficient evidence, but either from a melancholy temper, or a weak faith, or a misinformed conscience: and which soever of these is the cause of it, when that is once removed, we shall as plainly feel our own sincerity, and therein our interest in heaven, as we do now our bodily passions. And having once attained this assurance, it will animate our hearts with an heroic courage against all temptations, and carry us on with unspeakable alacrity through all the remaining stages of our duty; it will invigorate our endeavours, and wing our activity, and make us all life and spirit in the exercises of our holy religion. And as when the Christian army, after a tedious march towards the land of Canaan, came within view of the holy city, and beheld afar

off the towers and turrets of Jerusalem, they were so ecstasied with joy, that they made the heavens ring with triumphant shouts and acclamations, and as if that sight had given new souls to them, ran on upon their enemies with a courage that forced victory wherever they came; so when a good man, after a long progress from one degree of virtue to another, is got so far, as that from a certain sense and feeling of his own sincerity he can discern the new Jerusalem above, and his own interest in it, that blessed sight will fill him with so much joy, courage, and alacrity, that no temptation for the future will be able to withstand or interrupt him. So that his conscience will be always ringing with acclamations of victory, and the remainder of the march will be all a triumphal progress to him; and when he comes to the conclusion of it, to die, and pass the gate of this blessed city, the firm assurance which he hath of admittance will dispel the fears, sweeten the troubles, and assuage the pangs and agonies of the dolorous passage. So that he will die, not only with peace, but with joy, and go away into eternity with hallelujahs in his mouth. If therefore we mean to bring this our spiritual warfare to a happy conclusion, it concerns us now, while we have opportunity, to labour after a wise and well-grounded assurance of heaven.

SECT. VI.

Containing certain motives to press men to the practice of these duties of perseverance in the Christian warfare.

HAVING in the foregoing section described all those duties which appertain to the last part of our

Christian warfare, to wit, final perseverance; and shewn how effectually they all contribute thereunto, I shall now, according to my former method, conclude with some motives to press and persuade men to the practice of them; all which I shall deduce from the consideration of the great and urgent necessity of our final perseverance, to which those duties are such necessary helps and means. For unless we take in the assistance of these duties, in all probability we shall never be able to hold out to the end; and unless we persevere to the end, we are guilty of the most fatal and mischievous piece of folly in the world. For consider,

1. If after we have made some progress in religion, we wilfully relapse, we shall go back much faster than ever we have proceeded.

2. If once we totally relapse, we shall thereby forfeit all the fruit of our past labour.

3. We shall forfeit the fruit of our labour after we have undergone the greatest difficulty of it.

4. We shall not only forfeit the fruit of our past labour, but also render our recovery more hazardous and difficult than ever.

5. We shall not only render our future recovery more difficult, but also plunge ourselves for the present into a far more guilty and criminal condition than ever.

6. We shall not only render ourselves for the present more guilty, but as a certain consequence of that, expose ourselves, if we die in our apostasy, to a deeper and more dreadful ruin.

I. Consider, when once we have wilfully relapsed, unless we immediately recover, we shall go much faster back than ever we went forward. For in the

beginning of our religious progress we are fain to sail for a great while against wind and tide, against a strong gale of temptation from without, and a rapid stream of inclination from within; and while we do thus, we must be contented to get our ground by inches, and move forward by slow and insensible degrees; but in all our wilful apostasies we are carried on *secundo flumine*, with a full drift of temptation and inclination. So that if when once we have wilfully sinned we do not immediately check ourselves by repentance, in all probability we shall be driven farther back in a day, than we shall be able to get forward in a week. For your progress in religion lying up hill, but your apostasy down, you must expect, when once you are falling, to descend much faster than ever you ascended, and to get far sooner to the bottom again than you can to the top, though you should happen to fall just in the midway, and have no farther to the one than to the other. For it is hardly to be imagined what strength a bad inclination gets by a short repast and gratification; how when it hath been almost pined away by a long abstinence, a taste of sinful pleasure will raise and revive it, and render it as brisk and vigorous as ever; insomuch that it usually requires a great many acts of mortification to re-extinguish that life and strength it acquires in one short gratification. For as the fierce tiger, after a long confinement, will lie down tamely in his den, and by degrees lose all his fierceness, and grow manageable and obsequious; but let him take but one warm draught of blood, and his own savage nature immediately revives, and he grows as cruel and outrageous as ever: just so it is

with our wicked inclinations, which being reduced from their excesses, and kept under the close confinement of a holy resolution, will by degrees grow tame and gentle, and forget the alluring relishes of sin; but if once we suffer them to break loose again, and to come at those sinful pleasures from which they have been a long while alienated, they will soon recover their natural wildness, and become as headstrong and violent as ever. Wherefore it mightily concerns us to have a great care of all wilful apostasies; for to be sure your first slip will vehemently incline you to a second, and that more vehemently to a third; and so, like men that are running headlong down hill, the farther you go the more you will be pressed forward by your own weight, and the harder it will be for you to stop and recover yourselves. So that if you do not immediately stop, you will by a few days' sin lose back all the ground you have got by many a year's warfare; you will pull down more of your religion by one wilful sin, than you will be able to repair again by many a virtuous action; and like some prodigal drudges spend more in one mad frolic, than you have earned by many a hard day's labour. And if you do thus, it is impossible you should ever improve; for what you do in a week, you will undo again in a day; and so, instead of pressing forward, you will dance in a circle, and always end where you begun. So that unless you go on and persevere in well-doing, all your strife and warfare against sin will be but like rolling of a Sisyphus's stone, which after you have been a long while raising to the top of the hill, will in a moment tumble down again upon you; so that either you

must undergo the same pains to raise it again, or lie down under it, and tamely suffer yourselves to be crushed into eternal ruin by it.

II. Consider, if after we have made some progress in religion we totally relapse, we thereby forfeit the fruit of all our past labour. For so God himself by the prophet pronounces in the case, Ezek. xviii. 24. *When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die:* i. e. how good soever he may have been for the time past, if he doth not persevere to the end, but wilfully relapse into folly and wickedness, all the virtue he hath exercised, and all the good he hath done, shall be quite struck off from his accounts, and be never so much as mentioned to his benefit and advantage; but in that wickedness whereinto he is fallen, he shall as certainly perish, as if all his life had been a continued act or uninterrupted course of iniquity. So also Heb. x. 38. *If any shall draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.* And indeed this is a most necessary effect of our apostasy: for by falling off from our Christian course, we put ourselves back into the same state and condition wherein we were before we entered upon it; and the effect of all those good things which we did from the time we entered upon, to the time we deserted it, will be so voided and abolished, that there will not remain the least trace or footstep of it in our natures, but our will will become as obstinate again, our affections

and appetites as wild and extravagant, as if we had all along permitted them to run on in an uninterrupted course of iniquity. And having thus extinguished all the good effects of our past warfare, and rendered by our wilful apostasy our natures as corrupt and depraved as ever, we shall thereby be exposed again to the wrath and displeasure of God. For God's love and hatred are unvariably determined to the same grounds and reasons; and herein consists their immutability; not that he always loves or always hates the same persons, out of a blind fondness to the one or unreasonable prejudice to the other, but that he always loves and always hates them for the same reasons: and he hath expressly declared, that goodness and wickedness are the contrary reasons of this his contrary affection to his creatures: which if it be, it will hence necessarily follow, that as his hatred must convert into love to us, when from wicked we become good; so his love must convert into hatred of us, when from good we degenerate into wicked. Which alteration of his affection towards us proceeds not from any change in his nature, but from a change in ours: he always proceeds upon steady and unchangeable principles, and is for ever fixed and constant to the reasons of his love and hatred; which he could not be, if he did not alter his affection to us, when the reason of it is altered; if he did not abominate us when he sees us fallen and degenerated from that state of goodness, for the sake of which he loved us and took pleasure in us. So that by wilfully retreating from our religious progress, we do not only extinguish all those good effects which it had produced in our natures, not only revive those inveterate lusts we had almost

mortified, and blast those tender graces which we had therein acquired and improved; but, as a consequence of this, we run out of God's arms and embraces, and throw ourselves headlong from those glorious hopes to which we have been all this while advancing with so much labour and difficulty. What a madness therefore is it for men to think of retreating that have once actually engaged in the Christian warfare, to surrender themselves back into captivity to their lusts, after they have fought so many combats against, and obtained so many victories over them! O consider but the great pains you have been at, the many prayers and tears, abstinencies and self-denials, struggles and contentions with yourselves, that it hath cost you to retrieve yourselves from the dominion of sin, and the just vengeance of God: and is it not a thousand pities that all this should prove lost labour in the end, and be rendered as fruitless and insignificant to us as if it had never been? that after you have taken so much pains to stem the difficult tide, and are at last got within sight of shore, you should now faint, and yield to the fury of it, and suffer yourselves to be borne down by it again into that ocean of sin and guilt, out of which you were so lately recovered? Wherefore, as you would not render *your labour in vain in the Lord*, and utterly defeat yourselves of all the fruit of your religious endeavours, be still persuaded to struggle and contend, to strive and *press forward to the mark of your high calling*. For if you now slacken or remit your endeavours, and yield to the current of temptation, you will soon be driven down by it again as far from the love of God, and from the hope of heaven, as ever

you were in the most degenerate state of your natures.

III. Consider, that if by wilfully sinning we retreat from our Christian warfare, we shall forfeit the fruit of our labour after we have undergone the greatest difficulty of it. For, as I shewed above, the main difficulty of the Christian warfare lies in the entrance of it; and this I suppose you to have already passed. You have already endured those sharp pangs and throes that are wont to accompany the birth of a new resolution; you have undergone the hard penance of a deep and through consideration, the sharp stings and remorses of a solemn and sorrowful repentance; you have forced your most importunate inclinations, and withstood the most violent counter-struggling of a perverse and degenerate nature; you have conquered your will in the height of all its obstinacy and resistance, and rescued it from the arms of your lusts when it was most enslaved and captivated by them: all this you did, if you did any thing to any purpose, when you first entered upon this holy warfare: and ever since you have been breaking the strength of your evil inclinations, and conquering the antipathies of your nature to your religion: in which if you have made any progress, you must by this time have broken the heart of the difficulty of your warfare, and have much less opposition to contend with than ever: so that now, in all probability, there is nothing so difficult between you and heaven, as that which you have already engaged with and surmounted. And will you now turn your backs upon your enemy, when his main strength is spent, and you have al-

ready sustained the most violent shocks of his power? If you had retreated at the first onset, when your sin was seated in its dominion, and you were yet but raising your forces and arming your resolution against it, it had been much more excusable; for then you had the sharpest part of your conflict to undergo, being to contend with a flushed and a victorious enemy, who, having as yet all his strength about him, could not fail to put your courage to a mighty trial: but now to retreat, when you are past the worst, and have gotten above half way through; when you have pulled down your lust from its throne and dominion, and so far subdued it to your religion and your reason, that you have henceforward no more to do but to pursue a victory, which though you got with a great deal of toil, you may finish with a great deal of ease and pleasure; now, I say, to retreat in such a prosperous juncture, and give up the blessed prize which you have been so long contending for, what desperate madness is it! If you had never begun this warfare, or yielded in the first conflict of it, what a deal of pains might you have saved! How many prayers and tears, strugglings and contentions with yourselves might you have escaped and avoided, and at last been in as good a condition, if not a better, than that wherein your apostasy will certainly leave you! And when a man hath been so long taking heaven by storm and violence, when he hath broken through so many oppositions to come at it, and in despite of all the darts of temptation from without, and of all the weights and pressures of inclination from within, he is gotten up, as it were, to the top of the scaling-ladder, has laid his hands on the battlements of hea-

ven, and is ready to leap in and take possession of the joys of it, what a madness is it for him now to let go his hold, and tumble headlong down again into that abyss of sin and misery, out of which he had recovered himself with so much labour and difficulty! Especially considering,

IV. That by this our relapse we shall not only forfeit the fruit of our past labour, but also render our recovery more hazardous and difficult than ever. For what the apostle pronounces concerning apostates from Christianity is in a great measure appliable to those who, having engaged in the Christian warfare, fall off from it again to their old sinful courses; *it is impossible*, i. e. it is extremely difficult, *for those that were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance*, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. For besides that, by falling from his first repentance, a man grieves and chases the Holy Spirit from him, without whose aid he can neither stand when he is up, nor recover when he is fallen; and having chased him away, he cannot well expect that he will be so ready to return and cooperate with him after he hath treated him so rudely by quenching his motions, unravelling his workmanship, and extinguishing all those heavenly effects which his grace had produced in his soul. For how can this blessed assistant of souls but take it in great disdain to be thus mocked and disappointed, when he had been so industriously labouring for a wretch's good, to lift him out of the mire wherein he was sunk and perishing; and when he

had succeeded so far in his labour as to help him quite out, and was washing and cleansing his polluted spirit, and dressing it for the embraces of the Father of spirits, to see this wretch turn back after all, and plunge himself headlong into the mire again, how can he but resent such an ungrateful disappointment of his labour with unspeakable grief and indignation? and if upon such resentment he should, as he justly may, wholly retire from him, and leave him for ever to wallow in his own heart's lust, his condition will not be only dangerous, but desperate. What the blessed Spirit will do in this case I cannot certainly determine, because he may do as he pleases, being totally released by the sinner's apostasy from all obligation of promise. But it makes my heart ache to think how much reason there is to fear that he will utterly forsake and abandon him, and not throw away any more of his grace upon a wretch on whom he hath already spent so much to no purpose. And if the heinous affront which the blessed Spirit receives by your apostasy should put him upon this resolution, you are damned aboveground, and everlastingly forsaken of all hopes of recovery. But, besides all this, (which one would think should be sufficient to startle any sober man from making such a desperate experiment,) by falling off from your repentance, you must needs be supposed to offer a mighty violence to your consciences; which, having been already awakened into a through sense of your past sins, must necessarily reflect upon your present apostasy with unspeakable horror and affrightment; which, if it doth not presently scare ye back again to repentance, will put ye upon more desperate courses than ever. For now if your con-

science wont be quiet, you have no other remedy but to ruffle with it, and outbrave its horrors, by being more courageously wicked: and as those barbarous parents that sacrificed their children to Moloch were fain to make noises round the burning idol with drums and timbrels, to drown their dying shrieks and groans, lest they should move them to compassion; so when by your wilful relapses you have sacrificed your conscience to your lust, and it begins to shriek out from among those flames of guilt whereinto you have cast it, you have no other remedy, unless you repent immediately, but to make a Tophet round about it, and drown its outcries in excesses of riot; to put yourselves into a tumultuous hurry of wickedness and folly, that you may not hear those ill-boding shrieks within; and to sear over the wounds of your conscience with a thick custom of sinning, that they may neither bleed nor smart. So that, if once you turn recreant to your Christian warfare, you will be forced, in your own defence, to plunge yourselves deeper into sin than ever. For now you must sin, not only to gratify your lusts, but to stupify your conscience; and this last you can never do without being excessively wicked. You must now be puny sinners no longer, if ever you intend to sin quietly; but resolve to turn heroes in iniquity, and outsin your natural sense of good and evil. In order whereunto you must give your wounded spirit gash after gash, and follow the blow, till you have left it past feeling; you must heap on loads of guilt upon your conscience, till with the continued pressure you have rendered it callous and insensible; and when by this means you have sunk yourselves deeper into sin than ever, (as you will doubtless soon do,) how much

more difficult and hazardous must your recovery be! For now you will need much more assistance than ever you did in your first repentance, and have much less reason to expect it. So that though I dare not say your condition will be desperate, yet I must tell ye, it will be so fearfully dangerous, that unless God, out of a peculiar mercy to ye, awake ye by some extraordinary providence, and at the same time cooperate with ye by an extraordinary grace, you must certainly miscarry for ever.

V. Consider, that, by your deserting of the Christian warfare, you will not only render your future recovery more difficult, but you will also plunge yourselves, for the present, into a far more guilty and criminal condition than ever. For thus St. Peter determines in the case, 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. *If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment:* that is, by relapsing into those sinful pollutions out of which they had been rescued by the belief and knowledge of Christianity, they have rendered themselves much more guilty than they were before, when they were infidels; so that if they had never been acquainted with the gospel, nor taken one step in the paths of its holy commandments, it had been much better for them, and God would have been much less angry and displeased with them. For by our apostasy into a wicked life, we do not only

return back into as bad, at least, if not a worse condition than ever, but,

First, we do also make void all those operations of the Spirit of God, by which we were so effectually persuaded to undertake, and hitherto to prosecute the Christian warfare. By relapsing into a state of sin again, we wilfully undo all that he hath been doing; we revive those lusts which he hath been mortifying, and root up those graces which he hath been planting and watering within us; and when with great contrivance and industry he hath dressed and cultivated our nature, plucked up the weeds of it, and planted it with the flowers of heaven, we wilfully spoil and lay it waste again, and turn his growing Sharon into a barren wilderness. So that, besides all that guilt which arises from those sinful courses whereinto we are relapsed, we are now become guilty of the greatest outrage to the Spirit of God; we are guilty of destroying the dearest fruits of his labour, of laying waste his enclosures, quenching his motions, extinguishing his graces, and strangling all those heavenly effects which he by his powerful goodness had produced in our natures. And what a black aggravation of our guilt must it be, thus to baffle and disappoint the Spirit of God! But then,

Secondly, as by our apostasy we offer the rudest affront to the Holy Spirit, so we commit the greatest violence both upon our conscience and experience. For in all apostasies we sin with an awakened conscience, with the convictions of our guilt glaring in our eyes; and are fain to contend and struggle with our own mind, before we can break through those checks and restraints it lays upon us; which must

needs be a great aggravation of our guilt. For the more light and persuasion a man sins against, the more of will and malice there is in his sin, and consequently the more of guilt. For what can be more malicious, than for a man to dare and defy his own convictions, and charge into the very mouth of them, while they are spitting fire, and roaring everlasting ruin against him? This plainly shews him to be acted by a desperate resolution, when for the sake of his lusts he dares confront the terrors of his conscience, and rather than be barred the enjoyment of them, he will plunge himself headlong into a foreseen ruin, and leap after them into hell with his eyes open. And yet thus we do in all our wilful apostasies: we sin against the quickest sense of our danger, the loudest warnings of our conscience, and the clearest convictions of our reason; which being all most horrid aggravations, must needs swell up our guilt to a monstrous proportion. Neither do we sin only against our conscience, but also against our experience. For it is to be supposed that we have made some proof and trial of religion; and, having done so, we must needs be sensible that there is nothing in it but what is reasonable and practicable, and highly for our good; nothing but what tends to the tranquillity of our minds, the peace of our consciences, and the perfection of our natures: and being throughly assured of all this, and that not so much by discourse as by our sense and experience, what a horrid baseness would it be, if, notwithstanding this, we should renounce and desert it! If we had never tried it, we might have urged our ignorance or want of experience as an apology for our refusal to submit to it; we might

have pretended, that, for want of a more intimate acquaintance with it, we looked upon its commands as impossible, or at least as very difficult, and altogether fruitless and ungrateful to human nature; and that if we had once complied with it, we must have presently renounced every thing that is pleasant and desirable, and from thenceforth have been contented to sigh away our lives in unsufferable severities, and a melancholy retirement from all the joys and festivities of human conversation: for such frightful representations men that are unexperienced in religion are apt to make of it; which, though it be far from justifying, may in some measure extenuate their enmity to it. But you, that have tried religion, must needs have experienced that all this is false; that its commands are easy enough to a willing mind, and that the many advantages they bring with them do abundantly compensate for their difficulty; that they are so far from barring men any innocent pleasure or comfort of human life, that they purify the pleasures of it, and render them more grateful and generous; that, besides this, they bring mighty pleasures of their own along with them, the pleasures of a glorious hope, a serene mind, a calm and undisturbed conscience, which are such as do far outrelish the most studied and artificial luxuries: all this you cannot but know, if you have made any considerable trial of a sober and well-advised religion. So that, if now you apostatize, you will not only affront your conscience, but your experience too; and the past sense you have had of the goodness of religion will rise up in judgment against ye, and for ever silence all the excuses you can urge for yourselves, and leave

ye nothing to say, but that you were sick of your ease, and tired with the refreshments of religion. But then,

Thirdly, As your apostasy will be a grievous affront to the Spirit of God and to your own conscience and experience, so it will be one of the foulest dishonours that you can cast upon religion. If you had never been engaged in the Christian warfare, the honour of religion could never have been so nearly touched by your wicked courses, and all considering men would have attributed your enmity to it, to your ignorance and want of experience, and never have thought the worse of it, when they saw it so contemptuously treated by one that was never acquainted with it. But if now you revolt into wicked courses after you have made trial of it, what will the world say? Look ye, here is one that hath made an experiment of the religion you so much celebrate, and which you extol and cry up for such a pleasant and amiable thing: if it were what you pretend, how comes it to pass, that, after so long trial and experience of it, this man should now at last renounce and forsake it? Which is such an objection as can be no otherwise solved, but by demonstrating the man, whose apostasy started it, to be forsaken and abandoned of his reason. For if, upon the trial he hath made of religion, he had experienced it to be that good and grateful thing it is represented, it is not to be imagined he would ever have revolted from it, had he been capable to deliberate of his own choices and actions. And how can they that are strangers to religion forbear suspecting the goodness of it, when they see a man, after trial, and in his right senses, declare by his actions that vice is better

and more eligible than virtue, and to behold the pleasures of sin preferred before the joys and satisfactions of religion, by one that hath made a through experiment of them both? So that by apostatizing into sinful courses after a through trial of religion, we take an effectual course to defame and scandalize it, to render it a *stone of stumbling and a rock of offence* to those that have had but little or no acquaintance with it: and if by our example any should be disheartened either from entering into or proceeding in the Christian warfare, their blood will be one day required at our hands; and so we shall raise a most fearful cry upon ourselves, and have not only the Spirit of God and our own conscience and experience, but also the blood of all those souls who have stumbled at our apostasy, lifting up their cries together to the tribunal of God for a dire and speedy vengeance against us.

VI. Consider, if, after you have made some progress in religion, you revolt into sinful courses, you will not only render yourselves for the present more guilty, but, as a consequence of that, you will certainly expose yourselves, if you die before your recovery, to a deeper and more dreadful ruin. For this we may depend upon, that the Judge of all the world will do righteously; and consequently, that as, on the one hand, he will proportion his rewards to our services, so, on the other, he will measure his punishments by our guilts and demerits: and if he thus proceed, (as he most certainly will,) how horrible is it to think of the black and dismal fate that hangs over the heads of apostates, whose guilt, being aggravated by those abovenamed circumstances to such a prodigious bulk and magnitude, must be supposed

to draw after it a punishment proportionable! And if so, then doubtless the portion of apostates among wicked and miserable spirits will be the most wretched and deplorable. For besides those supernumerary stripes they must expect to receive from God, as being servants that have known their Master's will, and experienced the goodness of it, and yet have finally refused to comply with it; their reflections on their own apostasy, and the folly and madness of it, will doubtless gall and torment them a thousand times more than all the other stings of their conscience together. For how must it enrage them against themselves to ruminate on their own follies, as they are wandering through the infernal shades! O desperate creatures! from what glorious hopes have we precipitated ourselves into this dismal state! We had once got a fair way onwards to heaven, and were arrived within sight of its blessed shores: we had shaken off our lusts, mastered our inclinations, and subdued our wills to the will of God; and in so doing had conquered the most difficult part of our voyage: we had weathered the cross winds of temptation from without, and stemmed the tide of corrupt nature within; so that, had we but bore up courageously a little farther, we, that are now howling among damned ghosts, might have been triumphing with blessed spirits. But, O abominable fools and traitors to ourselves! after all the successful pains we had taken to be happy, we have shipwrecked our souls at the mouth of our harbour, and, to gratify a base lust, have leaped headlong from the brink of the *rivers of pleasure* into this *lake of fire and brimstone.* And have we thus undone ourselves, thus madly, thus without pretence of temptation!

O cursed be our folly, cursed be our lusts, and for ever cursed be we for harbouring and entertaining them! Thus will these miserable people incessantly rave against themselves, and with dire reflections on their desperate follies for ever enrage and multiply their own torments. So that were I descending to the bottomless pit, and had but so much time before I came there, as to make one prayer more in my own behalf, next to that of being wholly delivered thence, I know none I should sooner pitch upon than this, O Lord, deliver me from that portion of hell which thou hast reserved for apostates.

So that if, now that we have so far engaged ourselves in the Christian warfare, we should be so mad as to retreat into our own sinful courses, it had been a thousand times better for us that we had never engaged in it at all. For unless we repent of our retreat, and come on again, we have taken a great deal of pains in religion to no other purpose, but only *to treasure up to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath*, and heat the furnace of our future torments yet *seven times hotter*. Wherefore, since the matter is now reduced to this issue, that if we revolt from our Christian warfare we shall not only defeat ourselves of all the fruit of our past labour and contentions, but also enhance our future punishment; so that we must either resolve to win heaven by our perseverance, or sink ourselves into the nethermost hell by our apostasy; let us pull up our courage, and, maugre all temptations to the contrary, continue steadfast and immoveable in our Christian resolution, remembering what the *Captain of our salvation* hath promised, Rev. iii. 21. *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne,*

even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

CHAP. V.

Containing some short directions for the more profitable reading the preceding discourse, and also for the conduct and regular exercise of our closet religion in all the different states of the Christian life; together with forms of private devotion fitted to each state.

IN the foregoing chapter I have endeavoured a full account of all those instrumental duties of Christianity, by which we are to acquire, improve, and perfect the principal virtues of it; in the perfection of which virtues, heaven, which is the great end of Christianity, consists. And for the more distinct management thereof, I considered men under a threefold state: first, as entering into the Christian life; secondly, as actually engaged in the course of it; thirdly, as improving towards perfection by perseverance in it; and gave a distinct account of all those instrumental duties that are proper to each of these states. And now that what hath been said in that and the preceding chapters may have its due effect upon the reader's mind, I have thought fit to reduce it to practice, by directing men,

First, how to read and apply the several parts of it to their own particular states:

Secondly, by furnishing them with some short rules, for the more profitable exercise of their private religion in each of those different states, together with forms of private devotion, fitted to each state.

I. As to the first of these, it is to be considered,

that to the making men sincere and hearty Christians, it is highly necessary that they should have a right understanding, first, of the nature of the great and chief end which Christianity proposes to them; secondly, of the means by which that end is to be obtained; thirdly, of the natural tendency of all the virtues of Christianity towards this blessed end, and of the contrary tendency of the opposite vices towards their eternal misery and ruin. Of all which I have endeavoured to give an account in the three first chapters of this book. Wherefore I would advise the reader,

1. Carefully and seriously to peruse those chapters, wherein (because I have been sometimes forced by the sublimity of my argument to discourse a little more abstrusely than in any of the following parts) it will be necessary for him to employ more of his thoughts and considerations, and not to content himself with a slight and cursory perusal. And when, by a serious consideration of what hath been there discoursed, his mind is fully convinced what a kind of heaven he is to expect hereafter, what kinds of means are necessary to obtain it, how naturally all the virtues of religion do raise up men's souls to heaven, and how all the contrary vices do as naturally sink and press them down to hell, it is to be hoped he will be fully persuaded of the indispensable necessity of entering into the Christian life; which if he be, I would advise him,

2. Seriously to read over and consider the first and second sections of the fourth chapter, wherein are contained the several duties which are proper to his state of entrance into the Christian life, and also proper arguments and motives to engage him to the

practice of them; which if he would read to good effect, he must by no means content himself with a single perusal, but read them over at least once a week whilst he continues in that state, till he fully comprehends the meaning and use of all those duties, and the force and cogency of those arguments; which if he do, it is to be hoped he will at last be reduced to a through and well-weighed resolution of forsaking his sins, and actually engaging in the Christian life. Which being done, I would advise him,

3. With the same care and fervency, to peruse the third and fourth sections of the fourth chapter, wherein are contained all the several duties proper to this second state of actual engagement in the Christian life, as also sundry arguments or motives to press and enforce them; and when by the assistance of these duties he hath continued for some time faithful and constant to his good resolution,

4. Together with the third and fourth section, let him often peruse and consider the fifth and sixth, wherein are contained the duties appertaining to the third state of improvement and preservation in the Christian life, together with some considerations to enforce the practice of them. All which I would earnestly persuade the pious reader to read and consider over and over again, till his mind is fully instructed in the nature and use of each duty, and hath throughly digested the force and evidence of every argument. And this may suffice for the first thing proposed, concerning the profitable method of reading this practical treatise.

II. As for the second part of it, which is that which I mainly design in this chapter, viz. the rules and directions for the private exercise of our religion,

in each state of the Christian life, together with the forms of private prayer fitted for each, take them in their following order.

Directions for the more profitable exercise of our private religion in the state of our entrance into the Christian life.

In the morning, before you go into the world, enter into your closet, and there consider with yourself awhile the miserable state you have reduced yourself to by your past sinful courses, the absolute necessity of your forsaking them, and the possibility of your recovery, if you heartily endeavour it; and then address yourself to God in this following prayer:

O most glorious and eternal God, thou art the Fountain of beings, the Father of angels and men, the righteous and almighty Governor of heaven and earth; from thy throne thou beholdest all the children of men, and their most secret actions are open and naked to thy all-seeing eye; and such is the purity of thy nature, that thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity wheresoever thou beholdest it; with what face can I, a most miserable, polluted wretch, appear in thy presence, who, by the past course of my wickedness and rebellion against thee, have not only rendered myself guilty, and justly obnoxious to thy eternal displeasure, but have also contracted such obstinate dispositions and inclinations to sin on, as, without thy grace and assistance, I shall never be able to conquer! O desperate, vile, and ungrateful wretch that I have been! I have renounced the God of my being and the Fountain of my mercies; I have despised thy goodness, trampled

upon thy authority, mocked and abused thy patience and longsuffering, and, in particular, I must confess, to my own shame and confusion, I have been wofully guilty of ——[a]. And now by these my manifold abominations I have utterly undone myself, unless thou take pity upon me. I confess I have forfeited my soul into thy hands; and if thou so pleasest, thou mayest justly cast me away from thy presence, and make me a dire example of thy vengeance for ever. But I know, O Lord, that thou desirest not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should repent and live, and upon the propitiation of thine own Son's blood, thou hast declared thyself willing to receive returning prodigals, and to be heartily reconciled to them, notwithstanding all their past provocations; O that I could return, that I could but shake off those corrupt inclinations which detain my wretched soul in captivity! I am willing to contribute towards it whatsoever I am able; but, alas! without thee, all that I can do will be utterly ineffectual. Wherefore, for thy tender mercies' sake, for thy dear Son's and my Saviour's sake, have pity upon a miserable wretch, that, without thy helping hand, is lost for ever. And, since thou hast given me thy gospel as an outward means to save and recover me, O do thou enable me, by thy blessed Spirit, heartily to believe and throughly to consider it. For which end, I beseech thee to remove all sinful prejudices from my mind, that so I may impartially weigh those evidences thou hast given me of the truth of it; and do thou suggest them to my mind with such

[a] Here make a particular confession of all those sinful courses you have lived in, together with all their aggravating circumstances of impudence, obstinacy, and ingratitude, &c.

a clear and convincing light, as that they may at last conquer my infidelity, and beget in me a firm and lively faith. And forasmuch as my mind is vain and roving, and utterly averse to all serious considerations, O do thou, who art the Father of spirits, and canst turn the hearts of men which way thou pleasest, inspire good thoughts into me, and imprint them upon me with such a power and efficacy, as that my wandering mind may be reduced by them to a through consideration, and my stubborn will to a firm resolution of amendment. Particularly, I beseech thee to give me a right understanding of the urgent need I have of a Saviour, and of all those things which he hath done and suffered, and is still doing at thy right hand, in order to the cleansing my guilty and polluted nature, and restoring me to thy grace and favour; that so hereby I may be fully convinced how odious my sins are in thy sight, how base and vile they have rendered me, and at what a mighty distance they have set me from thee, and that, being convinced of this, I may put on a holy shame and confusion, and abhor myself in dust and ashes before thee. Thou knowest, O Lord, it is not in my power to soften this hard and unrelenting heart, and affect it with that godly sorrow which is requisite to work a true repentance. O do thou smite it with such a sharp and piercing sense of my sins, as may cause the floods of unfeigned grief and contrition to gush forth from it. Cause me to bleed for my sins now, that I may not bleed for them for ever; and that having felt the smart and anguish of them, I may utterly detest and abhor them, and never be reconciled to them more. Thus do thou assist me, O good God, in the exercise of all these duties, till thou

hast throughly conquered my will by them, and prepared it for a firm resolution to forsake all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. And now that I am going into the world among those very temptations that have hitherto so miserably captivated and enslaved me, O let thy blessed Spirit be present with me, to keep my drowsy conscience awake, and arm me against them with his holy inspirations; that so those good thoughts and desires which thou hast at present excited in me may stick fast upon my soul in the midst of my worldly occasions, and never cease importuning my conscience, will, and affections, till they have produced in me the happy effects of a serious and hearty repentance. All which I most earnestly beseech of thee, even for pity sake to a poor perishing soul, and for Jesus Christ his sake, in whose name and words I farther pray;

Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

In the evening, when you find yourself most fit for serious thoughts, go into your closet again, and consider coolly with yourself, whether you are heartily willing to part with every sin, and particularly with your beloved sin, and to submit to every duty, and even to those that are most contrary to your vicious inclination; if you are not, (as it is very probable you will not for some time,) or if you find the least reason to suspect you are not, press yourself anew with such divine reasons as are most apt to affect you with the hope of heaven and the fear of hell, with the love of God and of your Saviour; represent your obstinacy to yourself, with all its baseness and disingenuity, madness and folly, till you

find yourself affected with a sorrowful sense of it, and then offer up this following prayer:

O Father of mercies, and God of all grace and consolation, who art a ready help in time of need, look down upon me, I beseech thee, a miserable and forlorn wretch, that have wilfully sold myself captive to the Devil, and am now struggling to get loose from this my wretched bondage into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. I know, O Lord, that I am striving for my immortal life, and accordingly as I succeed, I expect to be happy or miserable for ever. I have seriously considered the reasons on both sides, and am fully satisfied in my mind, that there is infinitely more force in thy promises and threats, than in all the difficulties of my duty and the pleasures of my sin. But after all this, I find a law in my members, warring against the law in my mind, a perverse will that rejects the counsels of my reason, that makes obstinate reservations of some beloved sins, and exceptions to some particular duties, in despite of all the persuasion of my reason and religion. So that, after all my endeavour, I am still detained in captivity to the law of sin that is in my members, and am not able to incline myself to an entire resolution of amendment. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death? I know, O Lord, though I am weak and impotent, and of myself unable to shake off the chains and fetters of my lusts, yet thy grace is abundantly sufficient to rescue and deliver me from them; and thou hast promised to assist with it my honest endeavours, and crown them with a blessed success. Wherefore, for thy truth and mercies' sake, suffer not thy poor creature, who, with

pitiful and bemoaning looks, cries out for help to thee, to spend himself in weary and fruitless strugglings against this violent torrent of my sinful nature, which, without thy aid, will quickly overcome my poor endeavours, and drive me down into eternal perdition. My sole dependance is upon thee, my hope of success is wholly in thee; help, Lord, help, or else I perish; stretch forth thy powerful arm to my sinking soul, and let not this deep swallow me up; but do thou so quicken my faint endeavours, so strengthen my weak and doubting faith, so enliven my cold and languid considerations, so clear up my convictions of my need of a Saviour, and of the danger and odiousness of my sins, and thereby so increase my penitential sorrows and remorses, as that by all these means together my obstinate will may at last be conquered, and effectually persuaded to part with every sin, be it never so dear to me, and to comply with every duty, be it never so cross to my vile inclination. Then shall I freely resign up myself unto thee, and with a firm resolution devote all my powers to thy service. And that I may do so, and by so doing be reconciled to thee, O my offended God, before I go hence, and be no more seen, receive me, I beseech thee, into thy protection this night, that I may yet see the light of another day, and have a longer space to finish my repentance. All which I humbly implore even for Jesus Christ his sake, in whose name and words I farther pray;

Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

If upon searching your own heart, you find, that after you have fairly represented to yourself what sinful pleasures you must part with, what duties you must submit to, and what difficulties you must

engage with, you are willing, without any reserve or exception, to submit yourself to God, beware you be not too hasty to form your resolution, but take some little time to try yourself; see whether you will continue to-morrow of the same mind you are in now; and if then you perceive you have reason to suspect yourself, try a little longer, and at the present endeavour as much as in you lies to confirm and settle yourself in the good mind you are in, by pressing and urging yourself with all those arguments of your religion by which you have been thus far convinced and persuaded; and while you are thus trying yourself, instead of the former, let this be your evening prayer:

O blessed Lord, and most merciful Father, thou art a God hearing prayer, and to thee shall all flesh come; I admire thy goodness, I adore thy grace, that, after so many heinous provocations I have given thee, for which thou mightest have justly shut thine ears against me for ever, thou hast heard my cries, and pitied my misery, and thus far contributed towards my recovery. I acknowledge it is by thy grace that I am what I am, that this stubborn heart begins at last to relent, this perverse will to bow and stoop, these lewd affections to hunger and thirst after righteousness; that now at last my foolish soul is persuaded to part with those sins which are its plagues and infelicities, and to embrace those blessed duties by which thou hast designed to raise me to immortal glory. By these good beginnings thou hast given me some reason to hope for a happy success upon my poor endeavours. Praised be thy grace, I am at present heartily willing to be thine; and were I but sure to continue thus minded and

disposed, I would immediately make over my heart and will to thee by the most solemn engagement. But, O Lord, I am afraid of myself; I dread my own inconstancy; and thou knowest I have too much reason for it. I have mocked thee too often already with my deceitful promises and engagements; I have sinned, and then promised amendment; I have promised amendment, and then sinned again; as if all that I meant by my promises were only to ask leave of thee to sin against thee anew. And now, after so many falsifications, I would not for all the world deal treacherously with thee any more: wherefore, before I solemnly resign and devote myself to thee by a new purpose and engagement, I desire to make some farther trial of my own steadfastness, to see whether this present inclination of my will be the effect of passion or a settled judgment. In the mean time therefore I do most humbly beseech thee to be present with me in all my ways, and continually to influence my mind with thy grace and spirit; to strengthen my faith, to fix my consideration, to persuade my will, and feed and cherish these my holy desires with good thoughts and inspirations, that so I may remain steadfast and immoveable, and no temptation whatsoever may be able to alter the temper of my mind, or divert it from its good inclination; and that having had a sufficient experience of the fixed disposition of my soul to obey thee, I may devote myself to thee with a cheerful heart, and an assured hope of my own sincerity and constancy. O Lord, hear and help me for thy mercies' sake, and for Jesus Christ his sake, in whose most perfect form of prayer I farther pray;

Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

If, after a sufficient trial of yourself, you find you are constantly inclined to submit to God, to part with every sin, and comply with every duty, consider, that now it is high time for you to devote yourself to God, and what abundant reason you have for it, and what a powerful obligation you must lay upon yourself by so doing: and when you have seriously considered these things, give up yourself to God in this following form of prayer; which, for the greater sanction and more awful solemnity of your good resolution, you would do well to repeat at the next sacrament:

O most merciful Father, so infinite is the goodness of thy nature, that thou art always ready to pity and relieve the poor and needy, and to extend thy timely succours to us helpless sinners whensoever we cry unto thee. Of the truth whereof thou hast given me, who am the vilest of sinners, a most sensible proof and experiment. For not long ago I was so dead in trespasses and sins, that hadst not thou took pity upon me, and quickened me by thy grace, I had died for ever; my understanding was so blind, that I saw not my danger; my conscience so seared, that I felt not my guilt; my will so enslaved to my lusts, that I could not endure to think of parting with them: but now, blessed be thy grace, which first excited my endeavours, and hath hitherto prospered them, I do not only see the danger my sins have exposed me to, and sensibly feel the guilt of them, but am freely willing to renounce them for ever, and to part even with those darling lusts that have heretofore been as dear to me as my right eye. And now, O Lord, I am come before thee, and I hope with a true, loyal, and sincere heart, to offer up my

soul and body to thee, and vow an everlasting obedience to thy blessed will. For Jesus' sake refuse not this poor oblation, which though it be infinitely unworthy of thine acceptance, is the best thing I am able to present thee. To thee, O glorious Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I do from henceforth eternally devote myself and all my faculties; [* and here at the table of my blessed Saviour, and upon these sacred memorials of his wounds and blood,] I utterly abjure all known and wilful sins and rebellions, and particularly all such as have been heretofore most dear to me; faithfully promising by thy gracious assistance from henceforth to observe thy law without any reserve or exception. This in the sincerity of my soul I do here vow to thy divine Majesty; and however I may be hereafter tempted, I will never wilfully depart from it, or from any part of it: so help me, O my God, for Jesus Christ his sake, in whose own words I farther pray;

* When you renew your vow in the sacrament, add,

Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

Directions for the more profitable exercise of our private religion, in the state of our actual engagement in the Christian life.

When you go into your closet in the morning, consider seriously with yourself the solemn engagement you lie under; what a crying guilt it would be to violate it; what madness and folly to recede from it, after you have taken so much pains to reduce yourself to it; what mighty reasons you have to persist in it, and what powerful assistance is promised you, if you be not wanting to yourself: and then offer up this following prayer:

O eternal God, who art the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and dost through him bestow so many good and perfect gifts upon thy creatures, I desire for ever to remember and adore thy goodness towards me, whom thou hast snatched as a firebrand out of the fire, and at length reduced to a serious purpose of amendment after a long and obstinate course of disobedience, in which if I had still persisted I must have perished everlastingly. O blessed be thy great name, that after so many years' rebellion against thee, for which I have long ago deserved to be banished into utter darkness, I do yet behold the light of another day, and am allowed a farther space to repent and execute my purpose of amendment. And now, O Lord, as thou hast wrought my will into a good resolution, in despite of all the corrupt inclinations of my nature, leave not, I beseech thee, thy workmanship unfinished, but, by the mighty operation of thy grace, excite and enable me faithfully to perform what I have so seriously resolved. It is a mighty work that I have undertaken, to cleanse a base, polluted nature, and root up all its filthy lusts and affections, and plant it with all the heavenly dispositions, and improve them into everlasting happiness; and thou knowest what strong oppositions will be made against me, and with what powerful temptations I must struggle throughout the whole course of my future endeavour. So that unless thou wilt still go along with me, and still quicken and animate me by thy blessed Spirit, my work is so great, and my strength so little, that it will be in vain for me to proceed any farther. These importunate temptations that surround me will quickly conquer my present resolution, and I shall

do, as I have too often done already, resolve and sin, and sin and resolve, and so increase my guilt by the treachery of my vows and engagements. Wherefore, for Jesus Christ his sake, withdraw not thyself from me, but continue to assist my weak endeavours by thy powerful grace, till thou hast crowned them with a perfect victory. For which end, I beseech thee, inspire me more and more with patience and constancy of mind, that I may stand fast in my good resolution, in despite of all temptations to the contrary. Suggest to my mind those holy examples thou hast set before me, especially that of my blessed Saviour, and incline my heart to copy and imitate them. Direct me to some wise and faithful guide, that may be willing and able to assist me in all my spiritual necessities; and by frequently exciting me to dedicate my actions to thee, dost thou purify my intentions from sinful and from carnal aims, that so I may always live to thy glory. And since thou art present with me wherever I am, and dost always behold me, whatsoever I am doing; O do thou inspire me with such a strong, continual, and actual sense of it, as may be a constant check to sinful inclinations, and render me afraid of offending thee. Let thy blessed Spirit be my constant monitor, to put me in mind to consider my ways, and frequently to examine my actions, that so, whenever I go astray, I may be immediately convinced of it, and by my speedy repentance recover myself before I have wandered too far from my duty. And grant, I beseech thee, that the sense of my past failings may still render me more watchful and circumspect for the future; that whensoever I have been carelessly or wilfully faulty, I may from thenceforth be more cau-

tious of my actions, and more vigilant against the temptations that betrayed me. And that I may not run myself unnecessarily into temptation for the future, preserve me, O Lord, from sloth and idleness, and from intermeddling with matters that do not belong to me; and do thou still put me in mind to do my own business, and to be faithful and diligent in the state and calling wherein thou hast placed me. And that I may always serve thee with freedom and alacrity, remove from me, I beseech thee, all unprofitable sadness and melancholy, and help me to acquire an equal tranquillity of mind, and a becoming cheerfulness of spirit. For which end, good Lord, do thou inspire me with a lively sense and earnest expectation of that blissful state towards which I am travelling; that having this glorious prospect always in my eye, I may go on with joy and triumph over all the difficulties and temptations that oppose me. And that by all these means I may be more and more strengthened and confirmed in the good resolution I have made, do thou stir up my slothful mind to a diligent attendance on thy public ordinances, that so in the solemn assemblies of thy saints I may constantly hear thy word with reverence and attention, offer up my prayers with fervency and devotion, and approach thy table with all that humility and love, gratitude and resignation of soul, that becomes this solemn remembrance and representation of my dying Saviour. In these things, and whatsoever else is needful to secure my resolution of obedience, assist me, O Lord, for Jesus Christ his sake, to whom, with thyself and eternal Spirit, be rendered all honour, glory, and power, from this time forth for evermore.

After this prayer bethink yourself a little, what temptations you are like to meet with in the ensuing business of the day, and briefly recollect those powerful arguments which the gospel urges to fortify you against them, and apply them particularly to the sin or sins you are most inclined to; and then renew your resolution to God in the following prayer:

O God, who art my hope and strength, upon whose aid and assistance I depend, look down, I beseech thee, upon a poor helpless creature, who am going forth into a busy world that is full of snares and temptations. Blessed be thy name, my heart continues still resolved upon a through course of amendment; and therefore here, in thy dreadful presence, I do again most solemnly promise and engage myself, that, whatsoever temptations I meet with this day, I will not wilfully commit any sin, no, not the sin I am most inclined to; nor omit any duty, how contrary soever it may be to my nature; and that I will faithfully endeavour to keep such a constant guard upon myself, as that I may not be surprised and overtaken through my own inadvertence and unwariness. But this, O Lord, I promise, not out of any confidence in my own strength, but in dependence upon thee, and in hope, that, out of thy tender pity to a poor impotent wretch, thou wilt not be wanting to me in any necessary assistance, but that either thou wilt remove from me all great and importunate temptations, or enable me, by thy grace, to repel and vanquish them: and this I do most earnestly beseech in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ, with whose prayer I conclude this my morning sacrifice.

Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

In the evening, when you find yourself best disposed for religious exercise, set apart such portions of your time as you can conveniently spare from your necessary refreshment and diversion, to call yourself to account concerning the actions of the day; and inquire whether they have been agreeable to your morning promise and resolution: and, upon inquiry, you will find either that you have faithfully discharged what you promised; or that you have sinned unawares, or through carelessness and self-neglect; or that you have sinned wilfully, and against your own conscience.

If, upon inquiry, it appear that you have been faithful to your morning engagement, represent to yourself the great reason you have to rejoice in it, and to praise God for it; and then offer up this following thanksgiving:

Blessed be thy name, O most gracious and merciful Father, for those great and numberless favours which from time to time thou hast heaped upon me, who am less than the least of all thy mercies; particularly for the signal mercies of this day, for that thou hast not shut thine ears against my prayers, nor withdrawn thyself from me, but hast accompanied me with thy grace through all those snares and temptations to which I have been exposed. Praised be thy name, that thou hast not suffered me to be tempted above what I was able; that thou hast so powerfully assisted me against those temptations I have been engaged with; and, by putting so many good thoughts into my mind, hast strengthened my resolution, and rendered it so successful and victorious. It is to thy grace that I owe all the good I have done, and it is by thy aid that I have escaped

all the evils I have been tempted to; wherefore, not unto me, O Lord, not unto my strength or endeavours, but unto thy name, be all the glory and praise of this day's deliverance and preservation. O never let the remembrance of this thy goodness towards me depart from my mind, but let it kindle in me such a grateful sense, as may more and more incite me to love and obey thee, and depend upon thee for the future. And as thou hast been pleased to conduct me safely by thy grace through all the dangers and temptations of the day, so do thou take me into thy care and protection this night, and grant that I may awake in the morning with a heart so inflamed with the remembrance of thy goodness, and so encouraged with this day's success, and so endeared to the practice of virtue by the growing delights and pleasures of it, as that I may persist in my religious course with greater courage and alacrity: and this I humbly beg for Jesus Christ's sake, in whose name and words I farther pray;

Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

If, upon inquiry, you find that you have been failing in your duty, or that you have done any evil action, through mere heedlessness or surprise, endeavour to affect yourself with a sorrowful sense of your own folly, weakness, and carelessness, and then conclude with this form of humiliation:

O most blessed Lord God, who art infinitely glorious in thy own righteousness and holiness, and dost for ever will and act according to thy own nature, which is the most perfect law and pattern of goodness. To thy spotless nature no evil can approach, who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity: with what confidence then can such a polluted creature

as I am appear in thy presence: how can I lift up my guilty eyes to thy throne, who, to my past rebellions, which have been more in number than the hairs on my head, have this day added so many sinful failings and defects, that, shouldest thou be severe to mark what I do amiss, were sufficient to kindle thy displeasure against me! It was but this morning that I engaged myself to thee, not only to abstain from all wilful and deliberate sins, but also to set a watch upon my mouth and actions, that I might not offend thee unawares; but, to my shame, I must acknowledge I have been wofully careless and remiss, having this day suffered myself, through my own inadvertency, to be surprised into such actions, as nothing can render pitiable or excusable in thy sight, but the miserable frailty and weakness of my nature. What shall I say unto thee, O thou Judge of all the earth! I am guilty, I am guilty, and have nothing to plead for myself but the blood of Jesus, that all-sufficient propitiation for the sins of the whole world. O Lord, I do earnestly repent, and am heartily sorry for these my misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto me, the burden of them is intolerable: have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me, most merciful Father, and, for Jesus Christ his sake, forgive me all that is past, and grant that the sense of these my miscarriages may render me more careful and vigilant for the future. And let thy blessed Spirit be always present with my mind, to recollect my distractions, and awake my considerations, and warn me of my dangers, that I may no more be surprised by sudden temptations, nor hurried into evil actions by unexpected hopes or fears; but do thou so subdue my lower appetites to

my will, my will to my understanding, and my understanding to thy Spirit, as that, under his blessed conduct, I may, for the future, be prepared against all temptations, and furnished to every good work. And now, O Lord, let not the failings I have been guilty of this day deprive me of thy gracious protection this night; but grant, that, after a safe and comfortable repose, I may awake in the morning with such a sorrowful sense of them, as may for the future oblige me to be more watchful and resolute against them. All which I beg for Jesus Christ his sake, with whose prayer I conclude this my evening sacrifice.

Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

If, upon inquiry, it appear that you have committed any wilful, deliberate sin, endeavour to affect yourself with horror, shame, and compunction for it, by representing to your conscience the monstrous foulness and ingratitude, the deep malignity and desperate madness of your own action, and then conclude with this form of particular repentance:

O thou most dreadful Majesty of heaven and earth, who hatest iniquity, and hast proclaimed from heaven thy fierce indignation against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, look down, I beseech thee, upon me, a vile and guilty wretch, who stand here arraigned at thy tribunal by my own conscience, and am so confounded with the sense of my sin, and of thy just displeasure against me, that I tremble to draw near unto thee, and yet I dare not stay from thee. I acknowledge myself unworthy, infinitely unworthy to come before thee, and am prompted by my own horror and shame to hide myself from thee; but yet I know I must come, or I must perish. And

therefore here, O Lord, I cast myself at thy feet; and if thou shalt think meet to tread upon me, and to spurn me from thy presence for ever, I must own that thou art just and righteous in all thy ways. For thou hast been wonderfully good, beyond what I could modestly have wished or am able to express; thou tookest pity upon me when I was all wounded, and polluted, and weltering in my blood; when I was sleeping securely upon the brink of perdition, and had scarce any sense or feeling of my guilt and misery: in this woful plight didst thou visit my poor soul, and with thy preventing grace awake me to a sense of my danger, and effectually warn me to flee from that wrath to come. And now, when thou hadst brought me to myself, and to a through resolution of amendment, and my soul was in a fair way of recovery, like an ungrateful wretch, as I am, I have flown in the face of my Physician, I have abused his goodness, and baffled his grace, and wilfully and deliberately torn open my wounds again. And this I have done most treacherously, as well as ungratefully, not only against all the obligations of thy goodness, but also against my own repeated vows and engagements: for it was but this morning that I solemnly renewed to thee my promise of obedience, and therein vowed not to offend thee wilfully upon any temptation whatsoever; but, O vile traitor that I am, both to thee and to my own soul, I have by——[a] most basely falsified this my engagement; and this I did with the most unpardonable circumstance, even against the dissuasions of thy grace, the checks of my conscience, and the fairest warnings of my danger. Had I done

[a] Here name the sinful act you have committed.

it ignorantly, or unawares, or under a surprise, it had been pitiable; but, O my guilt! my guilt! it was knowingly, wilfully, basely, and maliciously, that I did this evil in thy sight; whereby I have forfeited my soul, my innocence, and thy love, and have got nothing in exchange but the pleasure of a minute, and a lasting shame and repentance. O vile wretch, O desperate fool that I am, what have I done! whither am I fallen! I have grieved thy Spirit, contemned thy authority, trampled on thy goodness, and wounded my own conscience; and by one base act have thrown myself headlong from all those glorious hopes whereunto thou hadst raised me. And now, O God, what can I say in my own behalf, my sin being so great, my folly so utterly inexcusable! O I am ashamed, I am ashamed of myself; I lament and abhor the madness and wickedness of my own choice; and O that it were in my power to recall it! But, wo is me! it is passed into an act, and by that act my innocence is already stained, my soul forfeited, and it is no more in my power to undo what I have done, than to recall the hours of yesterday. What then shall I do, or whither shall I turn myself? It is against thee, O Lord, against thee I have sinned, and now I have none but thee to flee to: I have nothing of my own to plead in my own behalf; my conscience condemns me; and my sin, my sin, cries aloud against me; so that unless thou wilt be pleased to listen to the interceding blood of thy Son, and to consult thine own bowels and compassions, and from thence to fetch arguments of mercy, I am undone for ever by my own folly. Wherefore, for Jesus Christ his sake, for thy own goodness' and mercy's sake, have pity, have pity upon me; heal my soul, for I have sinned

against thee; be merciful to my sin, for it is great. Thou hast promised to receive returning sinners, to blot out their iniquities, and to heal their backslidings. I desire, O Lord, to return unto thee; I hate and renounce my sin, and do here abhor myself in dust and ashes before thee. Wherefore, for thy pity's sake, O try me this once more, and do not presently cast me away from thy presence, nor take thy holy Spirit from me, but restrain me by his grace from all presumptuous sins, and suffer them not to have dominion over me. And quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake, that for the future I may watch more carefully, resist more vigorously, and walk more circumspectly than I have hitherto done: and that from henceforth I may be entirely devoted to thee, and serve thee without interruption, do thou so confirm me by thy grace in my holy resolution, as that I may choose rather to die than to offend thee any more. And now, O Lord, though by my rebellion against thee this day I have rendered myself most unworthy of thy fatherly care and protection, yet I beseech thee to watch over me this night for good, and give me a safe repose in the arms of thy providence, that I may have yet a farther space to repent of mine iniquity. And grant, I beseech thee, that when I awake in the morning, I may be warned, by the woful remembrance of this day's fall, to take more care of my steps, and to shun or refuse those snares and temptations that lie all around me. All which I do most humbly and earnestly beg of thee, even for Jesus Christ his sake, in whose name and words I farther pray;

Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

Directions for the exercise of our private religion in the state of our progress and improvement in the Christian life, with forms of private devotion fitted for this state.

When you enter into your closet in the morning, endeavour to affect yourself with gratitude and thankfulness to God for his grace, by representing to yourself the danger and misery of that sinful state out of which you are recovered, and the great incapacity you were in to recover without his assistance; and then make this thankful acknowledgment to him:

O most gracious and most merciful Father, thou art a liberal benefactor to thy creation, a never-failing friend to mankind, and a most tender lover of souls, for whose everlasting welfare thou hast been always consulting, and hast left no method of love unattempted, to rescue them from sin and misery. O blessed, for ever blessed, be thy great name, for the experience I have had of this thy fatherly goodness. I am a monument of thy goodness, a living instance and wonder of thy mercy: for me hast thou quickened, who was dead in trespasses and sins, and who had long ago perished in mine iniquities, hadst thou not been infinitely patient and longsuffering: I had forfeited my soul to thee, and thou mightest justly have cut me off, and given me my portion with hypocrites; and, considering how I provoked thee to it by my daily rebellions, I cannot but admire thy forbearance towards me. But that thou shouldest not only forbear me, but follow me with thy kindness, and never cease importuning me to return to my duty and happiness, till thou hadst conquered me by thy gracious persuasions, O incomparable love! O amazing goodness! never to be sufficiently

admired and adored! Wherefore praised, for ever praised, be thy grace, which hath redeemed my life from eternal death, and my soul from the nethermost hell; which hath rescued me from the snare of the Devil, and the pernicious bondage of my lusts, and implanted in my nature these heavenly graces and dispositions, and hitherto improved and advanced them towards my eternal happiness. This, O my God, all this, I owe to thy free and undeserved goodness: that I that was dead am now alive; that I that was lost am found; that I that was a slave to my lusts am made free from sin, and translated into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, is purely the effect of thy free grace, and to be entirely ascribed to thy all-powerful goodness. Go on, O Lord, go on, I beseech thee, and perfect thine own work, that so the glory of it may be for ever redounding to thee; and that as I have been hitherto a signal instance of thy goodness, so I may be an happy instrument of thy praise to eternal ages. And grant, I beseech thee, that the sense of thy unspeakable kindness towards me may so captivate my soul and all my faculties, as that I may be most entirely thine; as that my reason and will, my fear and hope, and love and desire, may from henceforth be all resigned up to thee, and for ever devoted to the honour and worship of thy infinite glories and perfections; and this I most humbly beg for Jesus Christ his sake, to whom, with thyself and thy eternal Spirit, be rendered all honour, glory, and power, from this time forth and for evermore. Amen.

After this thanksgiving, consider briefly with yourself the indispensable necessity of your perseverance to the end, and how not only vain and fruitless, but

also hurtful and mischievous to you, all your past labour in religion will be without it; and then conclude your morning devotion with this prayer for perseverance:

O God, who art unchangeably holy and blessed, who art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and dost never swerve or vary from the essential goodness and purity of thine own nature, look down, I beseech thee, upon me, a fickle, weak, and mutable creature, whom thou hast redeemed to thyself, and hitherto conducted by thy grace and Spirit. Thou knowest, O Lord, the weakness of my nature, and how unable I am, without thy strength and assistance, to finish the race which thou hast set before me; thou knowest what temptations I must struggle with, and what difficulties I must yet overcome, before I am seized of the blessed prize I am contending for: wherefore, since thou hast hitherto been my constant support and defence, forsake me not now for thy name's sake, but as thou hast begun a good work in me, so I beseech thee to finish and complete it; to uphold my feeble soul by thy free Spirit under all temptations and difficulties, that so by patient continuance in well-doing I may seek for and at last obtain honour and glory, immortality and eternal life. For which end, O Lord, preserve me from being over-confident of my own abilities, and inspire me with a holy jealousy of myself, that whilst I stand I may take heed lest I fall. And if at any time I should be so base and so unhappy as to offend thee wilfully, (which I beseech thee to prevent, for thy mercy and compassion sake,) O suffer me not to sleep in my sin, but recall me instantly by the checks of my conscience and the convictions

of thy Spirit, lest, while I add sin to sin, and one degree of wickedness to another, my lusts should regain their dominion over me, and thou shouldest be angry with me, and reject me from thy covenant for ever. And that I may every day serve thee more freely and steadfastly, wean me, I beseech thee, more and more from those temptations to sin that are round about me, and give me such a true understanding of the nature of all the goods and evils of this world, as that neither the flatteries of the one nor the terrors of the other may ever be able to withdraw me from my duty. And lest, while I am mortifying my old sins, I should carelessly permit new ones to spring up in my nature, good God, do thou mind me to search and try my own heart, and take a severe account even of the smallest defects and imperfections within me; that so I may correct and reform them in time, before they are improved into inveterate habits. And grant that I may be always so sensible of my own imperfection, as that I may never rest in any present attainment, but may still be pressing forward to the mark of my high calling in Jesus Christ. Suggest to me, I beseech thee, frequent thoughts of my mortality, that so, while I have time and opportunity, I may be preparing for my departure hence, and making provision for a dying hour. In order whereunto, assist me, O Lord, I beseech thee, strictly to examine and renew my past sinful courses, that so if there be any remains of guilt abiding upon my conscience, I may purge them away by proper acts of repentance, before I go hence, and be no more seen. And grant that as I have formerly abounded in sin, so that I may now redeem that precious time I have lost, by abounding in the contrary virtues; that so, as far as

in me lies, I may revoke and undo the multitude of my past sins, by doing all the good I am able for the future. And that I may hold out and persevere to the end, preserve and continue me in the communion of thy church, and suffer me not to be led away by the errors of the wicked, and to fall from my own steadfastness. And finally, I beseech thee to grant, that in the use of these blessed means I may so far prevail over the infirmities and corruptions of my nature, as that at last I may have a clear and certain feeling of my own integrity and uprightness towards thee; that so being from thence assured of thy love, and of my title to eternal happiness, I may run the ways of thy commandments more cheerfully, and at last finish my course with unspeakable joy. And now, O Lord, I resign myself to thee; take me, I beseech thee, into thy care and protection this day, preserve me from all evil, but especially from sin, and quicken me by thy Spirit unto every good work, that so I may serve thee with a free and cheerful mind, and make it my meat and drink to do thy blessed will. All which I humbly beg for Jesus Christ his sake, in whose name and mediation I farther pray;

Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

In the evening, when you enter into your closet, consider what is the present frame and temper of your mind; and upon inquiry you will perceive, either that through the present prevalency of your corrupt nature you are averse to divine offices; or that through bodily infirmity you are indisposed to them; or that through worldly-mindedness and vanity of spirit you are cold, and apt to be distracted in them; or lastly, that your heart is very much en-

larged, and your mind and affections vigorously disposed towards divine and heavenly things.

If upon inquiry you find that through the present prevalency of your corrupt nature you are averse to divine offices, endeavour to affect yourself with shame and sorrow for it, by representing to your mind the great impiety and baseness, the monstrous folly and ingratitude of this your present temper; and then offer up this following prayer:

O my most gracious God, and most kind and merciful Father, thou art the best friend I have in all the world, and hast shewn a thousand times more love to me than ever I shewed to myself; but after all the vast and most endearing obligations thou hast laid upon me, this vile and ungrateful heart of mine still retains some dregs of its ancient enmity against thee. Had I but the common sense and ingenuity of a man in me, how could I think of thee without raptures of love! how could I draw near unto thee without transports of delight and complacency! But, vile and ungrateful that I am! I can think of all thy goodness with cold and frozen affections, and can come into thy presence, not only with indifference, but reluctancy. Good God! what am I made of? what an insensible soul do I carry about me! I am ashamed of myself, I am confounded with the sense of my own baseness; and yet, woe is me! I cannot help it. I strive to shake off this clog of my corrupt nature, but still it hangs upon me, and sinks and weighs down my soul as oft as it is aspiring towards thee. O my God, have pity upon me, deliver me from this body of sin, ease my weary and heavy-laden soul of this grievous burden under which it labours and groans, and suffer not this spark of

divine life, which thou hast kindled in me, to be oppressed and extinguished by it; but so cherish it, I beseech thee, with the continual influences of thy grace, as that at length it may break through all this rubbish that suppresses it, and finally rise into a glorious flame. Then shall I always approach thee with joy, and breathe up my soul to thee in every prayer; then shall my heart be firmly united to thee in a devout and cheerful affection; and my prayers shall come up as incense before thee, and breathe a sweetsmelling savour into thy nostrils. Hear me therefore, O my God, I beseech thee, and strengthen me with all might in the inward man, that for the future I may contend more vigorously and successfully against these vile inclinations of my nature, which do so miserably hamper and depress my soul; that so at last I may be a conqueror, and more than a conqueror, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

If through any bodily infirmity, such as melancholy, weariness, drowsiness, or sickness, you find yourself indisposed to divine offices, endeavour to quicken your sluggish mind with the consideration of some one of the most moving arguments of your religion, such as the love of God and of your Saviour, the majesty of God's presence in which you are, or the blessed immortality you hope for; and then address yourself to God in this following prayer:

O blessed God, who art a most pure and active Spirit, who dost always move with an uncontrollable freedom, and art never hindered or wearied in thy operations; have pity upon me, I beseech thee, thy poor infirm creature, who am cumbered with this body of death, and so depressed by its manifold frail-

ties, that I cannot lift up my heart unto thee. Thou knowest, O Lord, my spirit is willing, though my flesh is weak; my labouring soul aspires towards thee, it stretches forth the wings of its desires towards thee, and would fain mount up above all earthly things, and unite itself with thee in eternal love: but, alas! its fervours are damped and its endeavours tired by this clog of flesh that hangs upon it, and perpetually sinks and weighs it down again. O my God, draw near unto me, and touch my mind with such a powerful sense of thee, as in despite of these my bodily indispositions may attract and draw up my soul unto thee. And if it be thy blessed will, release me from these fleshly encumbrances, and fit my body to my mind, that I may serve thee, as I desire to do, with a fervent and a cheerful spirit. But if it shall seem good in thine eyes to leave me struggling under these bodily oppressions, Lord give me patience and submission to thy heavenly will; that so when I cannot approach thee with that pleasure and satisfaction I desire, I may be heartily content to serve thee upon any terms, and that what I want of vigour and cheerfulness in my religion, I may make up in truth and in reality. And O let the sense of these my present indispositions cause me more vehemently to long after that free and blessed state, wherein, with fixed and steady thoughts, with flagrant love and an entire devotion of soul, I shall for ever worship, praise, and glorify thy name. Amen.

If through present worldly-mindedness or vanity of spirit, you find yourself cold, and apt to be distracted in your religious offices, endeavour to stir up your affections by representing to yourself the great-

ness and urgency of your spiritual wants, the vanity of all outward things, and the reality and fulness of heavenly enjoyments. And do what you can to recollect your wandering thoughts, by setting yourself in the presence of the great God, to whose all-seeing eye every thought and motion of your soul is open and naked. And when by thus doing you have composed your mind into a more serious frame, present this following prayer:

O thou ever blessed Majesty, who fillest heaven and earth with thy presence, and art always listening to the supplications of a world of creatures that hang upon thee, open, I beseech thee, thine ears of mercy to me, who am unfit and unworthy to approach thee; who, by setting my affections upon things below, and plunging myself into the cares and pleasures of this life, have estranged and alienated my mind from thee, and lost that delightful relish of thee with which I was wont to draw near unto thee. And now that I am retired from the world to converse with thee, and spread my wants and my desires before thee, those worldly cares and delights, with which I have been too too conversant, are importunately thrusting themselves upon me, to divert my thoughts, distract my intentions, and carry away my affections from thee; by reason whereof my mind wanders, my hope droops, and my desires are frozen, and whilst I am drawing near thee with my lips, my heart is running away from thee. O my God, have pity upon me, pluck my soul out of this deep mire, quicken, raise, and spiritualize these my groveling affections. Possess this heart, which opens itself to thy gracious influences, with such a strong and vigorous love to thee, as may lift me up above all earthly

things, and continually carry forth my soul in vehement desires after thee; that so I may always approach thee with a joyful heart, being glad to leave the company of all other things to go to thee, my God, my exceeding joy. Give me a sober, diligent, and collected spirit, that is neither choked with cares, nor scattered with levity, nor discomposed with passion, nor estranged from thee with sinful prejudice or inadvertency: but fix it fast to thyself with the indissoluble bands of an active love and pregnant devotion; that so, whenever I prostrate myself before thee, I may presently be borne away, far above all these sensible goods, in a high admiration of thee, and a passionate longing after thee. And now, O Lord, while I am addressing to thee, gather in, I beseech thee, my wandering thoughts, and fix and stay them upon thyself. And O do thou touch my cold and earthly desires with an outstretched ray from thyself, and cause them to rise and flame up to thee in fervours answerable to my pressing wants; that I may so ask as that I may receive, so seek as that I may find, so knock as that it may be opened unto me, through Jesus Christ, my blessed Lord and Redeemer. Amen.

If after this you find your heart is very much enlarged, and your mind and affections vigorously disposed towards God and heavenly things, fix your mind a little while upon the beauty and excellency of his nature, or upon some of the most affecting instances of his love, or upon the blessed state above, and then go on with this following prayer:

O thou most excellent Being, thou infinitely amiable and adorable Majesty, thou pattern of beauty and standard of goodness, who art glorious beyond

all praise, and dost outreach all wonder, and comprehend all perfection; blessed be thy name, thou hast touched my soul with a lively sense of thy glory. I feel it shining through me, and like an active flame insinuating into my heart: it fires my love, cherishes my hope, wings my devotion, and diffuses a vital warmth over all my faculties: it raises me up into a heavenly state, and fills me with joy unspeakable and full of glory: it captivates every thought in obedience to thy will, and brings every power of my soul into subjection to thee. Blessed be thy name, thou hast conquered me by thy love, and I resign myself to thee with a cheerful heart. I am entirely thine, I am thy servant, truly I am thy servant; and in this title I glory more than in all the honours of the world. But though I am highly advanced and exalted by serving thee, yet thou art so infinitely happy in the boundless perfections of thy own nature, that thou canst reap no other advantage from it, but only the pleasure of seeing thy poor creature blessed and made happy by it. What then shall I render unto thee, O thou joy of my life, thou treasure of my love, thou supreme felicity of my nature! Alas! I have nothing but myself to give thee, nothing but this poor heart, that burns with love to thee, that pants and breathes after thee, and desires above all things in the world to be eternally united to thee in perfect love. If I had ten thousand hearts to love thee, ten thousand tongues to praise thee, I would devote them all to thee, as freely and cheerfully as I do myself. For whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. O God, thou

art my God, and my portion for ever. In thee I am blest, and in the light of thy countenance I rejoice more than in all the joys and pleasures of the world. I am ravished with thy beauty, I admire thy love, and from the bottom of my soul adore thy wisdom and goodness. My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready; I will sing and give praise. Awake up my glory, awake all the powers of my soul, I myself will awake and celebrate thy praises. Praised be the God of glory, praised be the God of love, praised be the Father of mercies, praised be the best friend of souls; for thy goodness reaches to the heavens, thy glory shines throughout the creation, and thy mercy is spread over all thy works. Who can comprehend thine infinite beauties! who can rehearse thy noble acts! who can shew forth all thy praise! I do confess my thoughts are infinitely too short, my affections too narrow, my expressions too scanty, to comprehend and sufficiently admire and celebrate thy glory. But, O my God, thou knowest that I love thee, and, blessed be thy name, I feel infinite reason so to do. O that I could love thee more, that I could love thee but as much as angels and glorified spirits do; who yet cannot love thee as much as thou deservest, because thou deservest to be beloved infinitely. But my soul thirsts for thee and longs after thee. O when shall I be admitted into thy blessed presence, there to see, and admire, and love, and adore thee for ever! When shall I shake off this clog of sinful mortality, that sinks and depresses me, and flee to those happy regions of perfect love, where I shall continually feed upon thee with inexpressible delight, and be filled with a strong and

everlasting sense of thy goodness! O thou that art the beginner and finisher of every good work, be pleased to assist my holy endeavours, to withdraw my mind more and more from these sensible things, that it may have a clearer sight of its heavenly country from whence it came, and whither it desires to return; that so, having my eye always fixed on that blessed recompense of reward, I may live above this world, and, in despite of all its terrors and allurements, persevere to the end in a steady and even course of obedience. And now, O Lord, since thou hast been graciously pleased to inspire my mind with these delightful thoughts of thee, and to enlarge my heart with such sweet transports of love to thee; grant, I beseech thee, that they may not only please, but better me; that they may lift me up above all the temptations of this world, and revive my strength, and quicken my endeavours, and compose my distrustful heart into a steadfast dependance upon thee, that so I may be fruitful in all good works, and my heart may be established unblameable in holiness before thee, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus. Amen, Amen.

After you have used one or more of the foregoing prayers, according as they suit with the present temper of your mind, take a short view of your defects and imperfections, and especially of those that cleave most to your nature; and briefly represent to your mind the intrinsic evil and vileness of them, and how they clog your religion, blemish your nature, and obstruct your happiness; and then conclude with the following prayer for growth in grace:

O God, who art the most excellent nature, the

perfection of all beauty, and the fountain of all graces, who dost infallibly understand what is best to be chosen, and invariably choose by the best and purest reason; look down, I beseech thee, upon thy poor defective creature, who am ashamed of myself, to see how unlike thee I am; how I am laden with imperfections; and how, after all my religious endeavours, my nature is still vitiated with unreasonable lusts and affections; how much vanity and impertinence there yet remains in my mind, how much perverseness in my will, how much spiritual and carnal iniquity in my affections and appetites. Lord, I have been long a contending with this corrupt nature, and yet upon all occasions I find myself too too prone to be ——[a]. Woe is me! even my fairest graces have their spots and blemishes, my purest dispositions their sinful intermixtures, and my best works their flaws and imperfections. O my God, have pity on me, who here lie sighing at thy feet under a miserable diseased nature; and as thou hast begun the blessed cure in me, so, for Christ his sake, I beseech thee to complete it; that, being entirely recovered, and raised up unto newness of life, I may, in the perfect health and vigour of my soul, serve and glorify thee for ever. For which end, I beseech thee, confirm me more and more in the belief of those immortal pleasures beyond the grave, which thou hast treasured up for those that love and obey thee, that by the strength of a lively faith and vigorous hope, my soul may be raised above this world, and

[a] Here name the particular infirmities that stick closest to your nature.

learn to despise and trample upon all its gilded vanities, whensoever they present themselves either to allure or to terrify me from pursuing the heavenly enjoyments. Excite in me such a vehement thirst after those rivers of pleasures above, as may every day render me more cool and indifferent towards earthly things, more contented and satisfied under all the events and issues of thy providence, and more active and vigorous in my heavenly calling. And I beseech thee to inspire me with such clear and lively apprehensions of thy essential beauties and perfections, and of thy bountiful love and boundless benevolence to all thy creatures, as may every day more and more raise and improve my love to thee; that this being the great spring and principle of all my actions, may continually excite me to a cheerful obedience to thy will, and a vigorous imitation of thy perfections. O cause me to love thee for thyself, and religion for thee, and the instruments of religion, in order to thy glory and my own happiness; that so founding my content upon thee, and the blessed interests of a virtuous life, I may grow in grace, and be rich in good works, and go on with a satisfied and triumphant spirit from imperfection to strength, from acts to habits, and from habits to confirmation in grace; and may be still more and more confirmed in all the heavenly graces, till they are finally consummated into everlasting glory. And when, by thy grace and assistance, I have perfectly conquered the corrupt nature within, and the temptations without me, and am arrived into the state of everlasting triumph, I will lay all my victories at thy feet, and with palms in my hand, and hallelu-

jahs on my lips, celebrate thy praises to eternity. Hear me, O my God, in this and whatever else thou knowest to be needful for me, even for Jesus Christ his sake; in whose name and words I farther pray;

Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

THE END OF THE FIRST PART.

OF

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

PART II.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

AND

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

HENRY,

LORD BISHOP OF LONDON,

AND ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S MOST HONOURABLE PRIVY-COUNCIL, &c.

MY LORD,

I HERE present to your Lordship the first volume of a second part of that treatise of Christian Life which I published some years since, and which under the protection of your venerable name hath found good acceptance in the world; and to make an ingenuous confession to your Lordship, my design in this second dedication is not purely to render you the due respects of a presbyter to his diocesan; nor to render those just acknowledgments I owe to your Lordship for the happiness I have enjoyed, with the rest of your clergy, under the auspicious influence of your serene and watchful government; no, nor yet to express the grateful sense I have, and shall always retain, of the personal obligations you have laid upon me: no, my Lord, though these were all of them sufficient inducements, yet I confess, that, together with

these, I had a certain politic end in my eye. For I thank God I can truly say, my main design in composing this treatise was to benefit the world; but reflecting upon the manifold defects it abounds with, after all the pains I had bestowed upon it, I found that, to palliate its internal blemishes, it was but needful to grace it with some external ornament, and could think of none so proper for my purpose as this of affixing your Lordship's name to it; a name that carries with it power enough to recommend any thing to the world that is but pious, and honest, and well designed; and all that, I am sure, this is, how defective soever it be in other respects; which, together with the experience I have had of the great candour and benignity of your Lordship's temper, gives me encouragement to hope that you will not only accept, but approve it; and then I am sure your Lordship's approbation will give it credit and authority enough with the world, to enable it to effect those good and honest ends for which it was sincerely intended by,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Most humble, most obliged,

And faithful servant,

JOHN SCOTT.

THE

PREFACE.

WHEN I wrote the treatise of Christian Life, of which this and another volume now in the press is a second part, I had no design of engaging any farther in that argument; but now I find by experience that writing is like building, wherein the undertaker, to supply some defect, or serve some convenience, which at first he foresaw not, is usually forced to exceed his first model and proposal, and many times to double the charge and expense of it. For after that treatise began to be a little known in the world, I was advised from several hands that there was one thing wanting in it, which is the common defect of most practical treatises, and that was, an explication and proof of those main principles of religion in which the obligation of our Christian duty is founded, which they thought might be sufficiently done within a very narrow compass; though herein I find that either they were much mistaken, or that I have very much exceeded the necessary limits of my argument, which I am not yet convinced of; but that I must submit to the judgment of the world. I confess the prospect of doing it in that narrow compass they talked of was a great inducement with me to undertake it, and perhaps had I foreseen at first what a large field of discourse it would oblige me to traverse, I should never have entered on it; but when once I was in, I could not handsomely retreat.

And indeed, considering with what prodigious rudeness and insolence the very foundations of religion are struck at in this dissolute age, he who would now treat of them to any purpose will find himself obliged, not only to give a distinct and clear explication of them, but also to assert the

truth of them with convincing evidence, and to answer and expose those atheistical cavils that are levelled against them; which latter would have been much less necessary in an age of a more serious and religious genius. And upon this account I have been forced upon a much larger and more laborious proof of the several principles of religion than I first intended. Not that I have any great hope of reclaiming those who are professed atheists to the acknowledgment of the truth; for when men are seduced by lust, as I verily believe most atheists are, there is little reason to expect they will be reduced by reason. But that which I chiefly aimed at is to confirm and establish those that are wavering, and to antidote all against this spreading contagion of irreligion and atheism, which in a fatal chain draws after it, not only the ruin of men's souls hereafter, but also the utter subversion of all human society here; and it is this hath constrained me to enlarge this second part into two volumes, which at first view I promised myself to finish in one.

In this first volume I have treated only of those principles which are common to natural religion and Christianity together; as an introduction to which, I have in the first chapter explained and demonstrated the natural distinction of human actions into good and evil, by some eternal reason for or against them; and having shewn at large that God hath made this distinction sufficiently clear and evident to all men, to enable them to conduct themselves to their own happiness, and that those actions of men which fall under this natural distinction are the principal subject-matter of the commands and prohibitions of religion; I proceed in the second chapter briefly to explain the nature of religion in general, and of natural and Christian religion in particular: from the nature of both which I have deduced those fundamental principles from whence the obligations of religion are derived; the five first of which, being common to natural religion with Christianity, I have handled in this first volume in so many distinct chapters.

And then as for the last, viz. the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ our Mediator, which contains under it all those religious principles that are peculiar to Christianity, though

I have endeavoured to treat of it with all the brevity that is consistent with a clear and satisfactory account of the whole argument, yet it is run out into a second volume, which is now in the press, and I hope within a few weeks will be ready to follow this. And perhaps when the reader considers the copiousness of the argument it handles, he will rather blame me for being too brief than too tedious; for in treating of those doctrines which have been handled at large in other English treatises of the Christian faith, and especially in that incomparable one of our most learned bishop of Chester on the Creed, (a book which, next to the Bible, I thankfully acknowledge myself more beholden to for my instruction in the doctrines of religion, than to any one I ever read,) I have contracted myself into as narrow a compass as barely the necessary application of them would permit me; but where that renowned pen hath insisted more cursorily, (as for instance on the particular offices of our blessed Mediator,) I have more enlarged myself; though even there I have for brevity sake pretermitted some things I intended, less immediate and necessary, appertaining to the argument.

Upon the whole I can truly say, that, to the best of my understanding, I have herein delivered nothing but what is agreeable to the doctrine of the primitive church, which, as the most faithful comment on the holy writings of our Saviour and his apostles, I have all along carefully consulted in doubtful and difficult cases: and this is the reason why it hath stuck so long in hand, the pains I have taken in consulting the ancient monuments of Christianity about it being, as I may truly say, at least double to that of composing: and in the following the primitive doctrine, I have followed the doctrine of the church of England, which in its faith, government, and discipline, I believe in my conscience, is the most primitive church in the world.

As for the method I have chosen, which is to deduce all the doctrines of Christianity from one general head, viz. the doctrine of the Mediator, it is the most convenient I could think of for my purpose, which was to represent at once to the reader's view all the parts of our holy religion in their natural connexion with and dependence on one an-

other, that so he might be the better able to judge of the beautiful contexture and admirable contrivance of the whole; and that by seeing how regularly all the parts of it proceed out of one common principle, and conspire in one common end, he may be the better satisfied that Christianity is so far from being a heap of incoherencies, as some have injuriously represented it, that considering it merely as an hypothesis, abstracted from all the external evidence that accompanies it, the very art and contrivance of it, the proportion, symmetry, and correspondence of its parts, their subserviency to each other, and the concurrence and tendency of them all together to the common ends of religion, are such as do apparently exceed all human invention, and argue it to be the product of a divine mind. For as he who would form a true idea of the beauty of a picture must not contemplate the parts of it separately, but survey them all together, and consider them in their proportions and correspondencies with each other; so he who would frame a right notion of religion must not look upon it as it lies scattered and divided into single parts and propositions, but consider them in contexture, and as they are connected all together into one body or hypothesis. For it is in their apt junctures, their mutual dependencies, and admirable coherencies with one another, that the beauty and harmony of the whole consists. And therefore to do right to Christianity, and enable the reader to contemplate it with the greatest advantage, I have endeavoured to represent to him the whole in a view, and to give him a prospect of all the parts of it together, in an harmonious union and connexion with each other. For I verily believe that the mean opinion which some witty men have entertained of Christianity proceeds in a great measure from their broken and imperfect apprehensions of it; they understand it piecemeal, and take it asunder into single propositions, which they consider separately and apart by themselves, without ever putting them together under one regular system, and presenting them to their thoughts in that orderly connexion wherein the holy oracles have delivered them to us. For I can scarce imagine how any man of sense should contemplate

Christianity all together, and throughly consider the harmonious coherence of all its parts, and the wonderful contrivance of the whole, without being captivated with the beauty and elegancy of it.

And now I have nothing farther to add concerning this treatise, but only to entreat the reader not to be too severe in the perusal of it. For though as for the doctrine of it, I see no reason at all to apologize for it, because I am fully persuaded of the truth of it, yet being forced, as I was, to compose it by snatches, and in the more quiet intervals of a busy and uneasy life, I very much suspect the exactness both of the style and method of it; and therefore all the favour I desire is this, that where I have improperly or obscurely expressed myself, I may be construed in the most favourable sense; and that wherever I may seem to be confused or immethodical, it may be attributed to those frequent interruptions which the disorders of my body have given to my thoughts. And these are requests so very just and reasonable, that I am confident none will be so peevish as to deny me, but they who read books only to carp and find fault, and without any design to edify their own understandings. But I hope the reader will consider, that the argument here treated of is of too great moment to him to be so wretchedly trifled with; and that therefore he will not be either so disingenuous to me, or uncharitable to himself, as to peruse with such a spiteful design that which I sincerely intended for his good, and by which he, I am sure, if he pleases, may be the better for ever.

OF

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

PART II.

CHAP. I.

Concerning the being and nature of moral goodness.

ALL human actions are either necessary, or sinful, or indifferent. The necessary are such as are commanded, the sinful such as are forbidden by God, the indifferent such as are neither commanded nor forbidden, but left entirely free to our choice and discretion. Again; the necessary and the sinful actions are either such as are necessary and sinful in themselves, and are commanded and forbidden upon the account of some good and evil that is inseparable to their natures; or such as are indifferent in their own natures as to any good or evil inherent in them, but are made necessary or sinful by some positive command or prohibition superinduced upon them. Of the first sort are those which we call moral actions; as being the subject-matter of the moral law, which commands and forbids nothing but what is essentially and immutably good and evil; and whilst there was no other law but this, every action which did not oblige by some eternal reason, or, which is the same, by some inseparable good or evil, was left free and indifferent. But in process of time God superadded to this moral law a great many positive ones, whereby he obliged men to do

and forbear sundry of those indifferent things, which were left to their liberty by the law of nature. For such we call the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law; all which were indifferent before they were imposed, and as soon as ever the imposition was taken off from them did immediately return to their primitive indifferency: so that by the abolition of their ceremonial law the Jews were restored to all the liberties of the moral; excepting only the matter of the two sacraments, and of maintaining a visible communion with the church; which are determined by positive laws of Christianity. And of this latter sort of necessary and sinful actions are, not only all those indifferent ones which God himself has commanded and forbidden immediately, but also all those which he commands and forbids by his viceroys and representatives in this world. For whatsoever he hath not commanded or forbidden by his own immediate dictate and authority, he hath authorized his vicegerents to command or forbid, as they shall judge it most expedient for the public. So that when they command what God hath not forbidden, or forbid what he hath not commanded, their will is God's, who commands us by their mouths, and stamps their injunctions with his own authority.

And of this distinction between actions that are morally and positively necessary, the scripture frequently takes notice, and particularly Mich. vi. 6, 7, 8. *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?* &c. No; these are not the things that will render me acceptable in his eyes, and procure me a welcome admission into his presence; and yet it is

certain that these things were then required and commanded, and therefore were positively necessary: but that they were not necessary in themselves upon the account of any intrinsic goodness that was in them is evident from what follows; *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good:* as much as if he should have said, The things above named are in their own nature indifferent, having neither good nor evil in themselves; and are made necessary merely by positive command: upon which account they are insufficient to recommend you to God. But there are other things that carry an intrinsic beauty and goodness in their nature, by which they strictly oblige you to embrace and practise them, and do thereupon recommend you by their own native charms to the love and favour of God: and what these good things are he hath sufficiently shewn or discovered to you; viz. *to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God;* which are the main and principal duties that he requires of you. Which plainly implies that there are some actions which are morally, that is, in their own natures eternally good, and therefore eternally necessary, and some that are necessary only because for some present reason God wills and commands them. For no account can be given why he would be more pleased with justice and mercy and humanity, than with sacrifice, unless we suppose the former to be good, and therefore necessary upon immutable reasons, and upon that account to be immutably pleasing to him; and the latter to be necessary only upon mutable reasons, which therefore were to lose their necessity as soon as those reasons did alter and cease. For had sacrifices been good in their own nature, their

goodness had been as unalterable as their nature; whereas on the contrary we find, that whereas their nature neither is nor can be altered, yet their goodness or necessity is. For as, before God adopted them into the rubric of religion by his own positive institution, they were indifferent things; so after this institution was repealed by a contrary command, they became unlawful. So that it is now as necessary that we should not offer them in the worship of God, as it was before that we should. And the same may be said of all the other rights of the Mosaic law: which being in their own nature indifferent, could no otherwise be converted either into necessary or sinful, but by God's express command or prohibition. Whereas justice and mercy, &c. are good in themselves abstractly considered from all will and command; and are not good merely because they are commanded, but are commanded because they are good; because they carry with them such unalterable reasons as do in themselves render the practice of them eternally necessary. For though there be very good reason why men should not offer material sacrifices, notwithstanding they were once enjoined; yet it can never be reasonable for them to be unjust, or cruel, or proud, because the contrary virtues carry such fixed and immutable reasons with them as will bind and oblige us to eternity; insomuch, that though we had a dispensation to be proud under the broad seal of heaven, yet it would still be very absurd and unreasonable to be so. And as things that are only positively necessary or sinful derive all their necessity and sinfulness from God's direct or express command and prohibition; so they cannot be commanded or forbidden by consequence.

For if the matter of them be antecedently lawful or indifferent, it must necessarily remain so till it be directly commanded or forbidden; there being no other reason to bound and limit it, but only the will of the lawgiver in whose disposal it is; and therefore, till he directly signifies his will either for or against it, it must remain as it is, i. e. free and indifferent. But you will say, suppose God hath commanded such an indifferent thing for such a reason, doth it not thence follow, that he thereby commands every other indifferent thing that hath the same reason for it? I answer, No; for if the reason why he commands it be necessary and eternal, it is not a thing indifferent, but morally necessary, and so is every thing else that hath the same reason for it: and consequently the reason of the law, though it be applied but to one thing, extends to every thing of the same nature; because in all moral cases the reason of the law is the law. But if the thing commanded be in itself indifferent, the reason why it is commanded cannot be necessary; and therefore though there be the same reason why another thing of the same nature should be commanded, yet it doth not necessarily oblige, unless it be commanded actually, because in such cases it is not the reason but the authority of the law that obliges; and therefore, where there is only the reason, and not the law, it lays no obligation to the conscience.

From the whole therefore it is evident, what is the difference between things that are positively and morally necessary and sinful; which I thought very necessary to explain at large, for the giving a fuller light to the ensuing discourse, in which I shall endeavour to shew,

First, That there is such an intrinsic goodness in some human actions, as renders them for ever necessary and obliging to us.

Secondly, That God hath sufficiently discovered to us what those human actions are which carry with them this perpetual obligation.

Thirdly, That these actions which carry with them this perpetual obligation are the main and principal parts of religion.

SECT. I.

That there is such an intrinsic good in some human actions, as renders them for ever necessary and obliging to us.

GOOD is twofold, absolute or respective; or the good of the end and the good of the means. The good of the end is that which is the perfection and happiness of any being; the good of the means is that which tends and conduces thereunto. As for instance, the absolute good of a brute animal consists in the perfection and satisfaction of its sense, or in having perfect feeling and sensation of such things as are most grateful to its appetite and senses. Its respective good is the means by which its senses are perfected, or rendered lively and vigorous, and by which it is provided for with such things as are grateful and pleasing to them. For there being in every animate nature a principle whereby it is necessarily inclined to promote its own preservation and well-being; that which hath in it a fitness to promote this end is called good, as on the contrary that which is apt to hinder it, evil. Now man, being not only a sensitive but a rational creature, hath a twofold good belonging to his nature: the first sensitive, which is the same with that of brute animals,

consisting in the perfection and satisfaction of his bodily senses and appetites, and in those means which conduce thereunto; and this for distinction sake is called his natural good: the second rational, which consists in the perfection and satisfaction of his rational faculty, and in those means which tend thereunto; and this is styled his moral good, though in reality it is as much natural as the former. For man being naturally as well rational as sensitive, that which promotes his rational perfection and happiness is no less naturally good for him than that which promotes his sensitive. Nay his rational nature being the much more noble and excellent part of him, that which naturally promotes the perfection and happiness of it, is in itself a much greater good to his nature, and ought to be preferred by him before any of those natural goods which conduce only to the happiness of his sensitive nature; and he who indulges his sensitive part in any pleasure which his rational disallows, doth thereby create a torment to himself, and raise a devil in his own mind. For though reason and religion do allow that the sensitive nature should be gratified in all its natural appetites and desires; yet neither allow that it should be pampered and indulged in any such excesses, as are prejudicial either to itself or to that rational nature whereunto it is joined; and he who indulges his sense in any such excesses renders himself obnoxious to his own reason, and to gratify the brute in him displeases the man, and sets his two natures at variance. So that there is nothing can be naturally good for us, that is any way inconsistent with what is morally so, i. e. with what conduces to the perfection and happiness of our rational nature; and

though this natural and moral good are no way inconsistent with one another, yet it is the moral that is the supreme good of a man, because it is the good of his most excellent nature. Having thus premised what I mean by good in general, and particularly by moral good, I proceed to shew that in some human actions there is such an intrinsic moral good as renders them for ever obliging to us. And this I shall endeavour in these following propositions:

First, That the happiness of human nature is founded in its perfection.

Secondly, That the perfection of human nature consists in acting suitably to the most perfect reason,

Thirdly, That the most perfect reason is that wherein all reasonable beings do consent and agree.

Fourthly, That there are certain rules of moral good, wherein all reasonable beings are agreed.

Fifthly, That to act suitably to those rules hath been always found by universal experience conducible to the happiness of human nature, and the contrary mischievous thereunto.

I. That the happiness of human nature is founded in its perfection. For the perfection of beings consists in their being completely disposed and adapted for the end whereunto they are designed. Now the end of all beings that have life and sense is that sort of happiness that is suitable to their natures; for it is thither that they all of them naturally tend, and therein that their faculties do all concentre. When therefore their faculties or powers of action are completely disposed to enjoy the proper happiness of their natures, then they are perfect in their kind. Thus for instance, the end of brutes, which

have only bodily sense, is sensitive and corporeal happiness; and therefore then is the brute creature perfect in its kind, when it hath not only all the parts and senses that are necessary to procure and enjoy its happiness, but hath them also perfectly fitted, tempered, and qualified to pursue and relish it. And supposing that all the pleasure or happiness of a beast consisted in the taste and smell of its pasture, it could never be completely happy, so long as the organs of its smell and taste were imperfect. So that the perfection of every sensible nature consists in being perfectly disposed to enjoy its natural happiness. And accordingly herein consists the perfection of human nature, in being perfectly fitted and disposed to enjoy and relish human happiness. For this being its proper end, it is impossible it should ever be perfect in its kind, till it is completely contempered and adapted thereunto. So that our happiness must necessarily be founded in our perfection, which is nothing else but the perfect disposition of our natures to relish and enjoy those goods wherein the happiness of our nature consists; and till our nature is perfectly disposed to enjoy them, all the good things of heaven and earth will be insufficient to render us perfectly happy.

II. That the perfection of human nature consists in acting suitably to the most perfect reason. For reason, being the top and crown of human nature, hath a natural right to command and dispose of its motions; to be the eye of its will, and the guide of its affections, and the law of all its powers of action. And indeed for what other use serves the reason of a man, but to prescribe rules to his unreasonable affections, to light and direct them in their proper ob-

jects, and, as they are moving towards them, to moderate their excesses, and to quicken their defects, and to lead them on to true happiness in an even course, through all the wild mazes of popular mistake? And, unless it be thus employed, the man is reasonable in vain, and his light, like a candle enclosed in a dark lantern, burns out in waste, and spends itself in an useless and unprofitable blaze. And whilst, to please our appetites and passions, we run counter to the advice of our reason, we forsake the rule of our natures, and act like beasts, and not like men; in which course of action if we persist, we must necessarily degenerate from ourselves, and sink by degrees into the most sordid brutality. For when once our appetites have gotten the command of our reason, and not only dethroned but enslaved it, the very order of our nature is transported, and we are become our own reverse and antipodes. If therefore we should arrive at our perfection, it must be by following our reason, and submitting all our affections and appetites to its government. For what else can be the perfection of a rational nature, but to be perfectly rational? And what is it to be perfectly rational, but to have our minds throughly instructed with the principles of right reason, and our will and affections entirely regulated by them? For herein consists the supreme perfection, not only of men, but of angels; yea, and of God himself, the crown and glory of whose nature it is, that he always knows, and chooses, and acts what is fittest, and best, and most reasonable. And when once our understanding is so far enlightened, as that it always dictates right reason to us; and our will and affections are so far subdued, as that they always freely and cheerfully

comply with it; we have arrived to the very top of our nature, and are commenced perfect men in Christ Jesus.

III. That the most perfect reason is that wherein all reasonable beings do consent and agree: for if there be any such matter as *true* and *false*, *reasonable* and *unreasonable*, in the nature of things; and if there be any such thing as *understanding* among beings, whereby they are capable of distinguishing between the one and the other; either that must be true and reasonable which all understandings do consent and agree in, or all the understandings that are in the world must be under a fatal cheat and delusion. Which latter, being supposed, inevitably destroys all knowledge and certainty, and lays a foundation for the wildest scepticism. For supposing all understandings to be deceived and imposed on, it is impossible for us to be certain of any thing; and, for all we know, a part may be bigger than the whole, two and two may make twenty, and both parts of a contradiction may be true. Nay, we can never be certain whether we are not dreaming when we think we are awake, and whether we are not awake when we think we are dreaming. Either therefore we must renounce all certainty whatsoever, and fluctuate in eternal scepticism, or allow that to be true and reasonable which all understandings do unanimously vote so.

IV. That there are certain rules of moral goodness, concerning the immutable reason whereof all understandings are agreed. For such are all those which prescribe the dueness of worship and veneration to God, of obedience and loyalty to our parents and superiors, of temperance and fortitude to our-

selves, and of justice and charity to one another; to the goodness and reasonableness of which rules all understandings do as unanimously concur, as to the truth of any proposition in the mathematics. Now, of all the orders of reasonable beings, that which we most converse with, and with whose consent and agreement in any matters we are best acquainted, is that of men; and therefore, if among men we can discover such an universal agreement concerning the goodness of these rules, as will warrant us to conclude all other rational beings to be consenting with them, this will be a sufficient demonstration of the truth of the proposition. These two things therefore I shall endeavour to make out; 1. That the reason of men is universally consenting in this matter, viz. That there is an immutable goodness in these rules of morality. 2. That this universal consent of men's reason in this matter is a sufficient demonstration, that all other reasonable beings are consenting with them.

First, therefore, there is nothing more evident than that men are universally agreed in this matter; That to worship God, to honour their parents and superiors, to be temperate in their passions and appetites, and just and charitable towards one another, are things in their own nature immutably good: that this is not an opinion peculiar to such an age or to such a nation, or to such a sect of religion, but the universal judgment of all mankind, of whatsoever age, nation, or religion. For it is upon this judgment that all that conscience is founded, which approves of or condemns men's actions; which conscience is nothing else but a sense or feeling of moral good and evil; and is every whit as natural to

men's minds as the sense of pleasant or painful touches to their bodies. Since therefore general effects must spring from general causes, it necessarily follows, that that pain and pleasure which men's minds generally feel upon the commission of bad and good actions must be resolved into some general cause; and what else can that be, but the general consent of their reason concerning the immutable evil of the one and good of the other? I know it is pretended by some of our modern navigators, that there are a sort of people in the world who have not the least sense of good and evil, and do own neither God, nor religion, nor morality. But considering the short converse and imperfect intercourse which these our new discoverers have had with those barbarous countries, it is fairly supposed that the inhabitants may have notions, both religious and moral, of which strangers, who understand not their language and customs and manners, can make little or no discovery. But suppose that what they report were true, yet, by their own confession, these wretched barbarians are in all other things so extremely brutish, that they discover no other token of their humanity but their shape. For they live altogether regardless of themselves, of the conveniences of their lives, and of the dignity of their natures; without making any reflections on their own minds, or any observations from their own experience. Since therefore all knowledge is acquired by attention, it is not at all impossible for creatures so utterly supine and negligent to be ignorant of the most common notions; but for any man to question the truth of this general rule, because there are a few exceptions from it, is every whit as absurd as if he should question whether men

are generally two-legged animals, because there have been some monsters with three. And what if among men there are some monsters in respect of their minds, as well as others in respect of their bodies; this is no more a prejudice to the standing laws of human nature, than prodigies are to the regularity of the constant course of universal nature. *Specimen naturæ cujuslibet*, saith Tully, *a natura optima sumendum est;* i. e. The true sample of every nature is to be taken from the best natures of the kind. Since therefore the men of all nations and ages and religions, who have in any measure attended to the nature of things, and made but any tolerable use of their reasons, are, and always have been, universally agreed, that there is an immutable good in virtue, and evil in vice, it is no argument at all, that this is not the general sense of mankind, supposing it true, which is very questionable, that there are some few such inhuman barbarians in the world as make no distinction at all between them. But then,

Secondly, This universal consent of men's reason in this matter is a sufficient demonstration, that all other reasonable beings are consenting with them. For it shews that God himself is of this mind: and, if he be, we may be sure that all other reasonable beings are. For if we believe that God made us, we must believe that he made us for some end; and if he made us for any end, he must esteem those actions good which promote it, and those evil which obstruct and hinder it. And what other end can an infinitely happy and blessed Being have in making other beings, but only to do them good, and, according to their several capacities, to make them partakers of his own happiness? And if this be the end for which God

made us, to be sure those actions must be good in his esteem that are beneficial, and those evil that are hurtful and mischievous to our nature. And therefore, since he hath implanted in us, not only a natural desire of happiness, but also a rational faculty to discern what actions make for our happiness, and what not; we may be sure that whatsoever this faculty doth universally determine to be good or evil for us, is good or evil in the judgment of God. It is true, when the reason that is in one man judges contrary to the reason that is in another, there must be a disagreement on one side or the other from the reason and judgment of God: but when all men's reason is agreed that this is good and that evil, it is plain that this is the judgment of the rational faculty, which naturally makes such a distinction of things. For no man, that uses his reason, can possibly think that truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, mercy and cruelty, are equally good in themselves; his rational faculty only being so framed, as that, at the first glance and reflection, it naturally distinguishes them into good and evil. When therefore God hath created us with such a faculty, as naturally makes such a judgment of good and evil, that judgment must be God's, as well as the faculty which made it. That therefore which is the unanimous judgment of all men must be the natural language of the rational faculty; and that which is the natural language of the rational faculty must be the language of the God of nature. For he who created me with such a faculty as naturally judges this good and that evil, must either have the same judgment himself, or create in me a contradiction to his own judgment; and that judgment, which he hath created in me,

he must be supposed to create in all other beings that are capable of judging; otherwise he would be the author of contradictory judgments. For should one rational faculty naturally judge this, and another the contrary, they must necessarily be so framed as to contradict each other; and, consequently, he who framed both must be the author of the contradiction. So that this universal consent of men, concerning the good and evil of human actions, is a plain evidence that God and all other rational beings are consenting with them.

V. And lastly, that men's acting conformably to these rules of moral goodness, in which they are thus universally consenting, hath by long and constant experience been found most conducive to men's welfare and happiness. For the proof whereof I shall need urge no other argument than this, that the great design of all human laws and constitutions hath been to secure and enforce these rules of morality; which is a plain argument that men have always found by experience that they are naturally good, and productive of their happiness and welfare. For how can it be thought, that, after men have had so many thousand years' trial of piety and justice, and mercy and temperance, they should still be so solicitous to fence and guard them with laws, had they not found them highly advantageous, and their contraries as mischievous to mankind. For do but suppose that the contraries to all virtue were for experiment sake imposed for some time upon mankind, and it were made as penal by the laws of nations to be pious and just, merciful and temperate, as it is now to be the contrary; is it imaginable that that which we now call vice should in process of time acquire the same

universal reputation that virtue hath always had among men? Or at least is it probable, that, after some thousand years' trial and experience of such a law, men should still be as much concerned to guard and enforce it, as they are and always have been to secure the law of piety and virtue? No, it is most certain they would not. For the very enjoining of impiety, injustice, and cruelty, would be in effect to enjoin men to render themselves most wretched and miserable; to surrender up all the supports of their hope, the peace of their consciences, and the tranquillity of their minds; to live in everlasting broils and discords, then turn robbers and cut-throats to one another, and utterly deprive themselves of all the comforts and securities of human societies. So that there is no doubt but, after a few years of experience of the mischievous consequents of such a law, the whole world would groan under it as an insupportable tyranny; and even the most vicious would soon grow quite weary of it, and heartily wish that it were for ever repealed, and the good old laws of piety and virtue restored and enforced upon mankind. And if so, it is plain that virtue and vice are distinguished by their natures into good and evil; and that the obligation we lie under to practise the one and abstain from the other are not founded in any arbitrary constitution, but in the essential goodness and malignity that inseparably adheres to them.

And if we consult the experience of particular men, we shall always find, that whereas impiety and injustice, fraud and malice, do naturally torment men's minds with anguish and confusion, haunt their breasts with fearful thoughts and dire expectations,

harass their souls with perpetual malecontentedness, and intricate their whole lives with everlasting shifts and intrigues; piety and justice, truth and benevolence, do as naturally soothe and ravish their minds, fill them with blessed hopes and cheerful reflections; compose their passions, strengthen and invigorate their hearts, and render the whole course of their lives plain and direct, even and easy. And hereby virtue doth sensibly recommend itself to our natures in all its capacities, as being suited to the satisfaction of all its reasonable desires; and so by consequence designed to make up the completest and most entire enjoyment. All which is as plain and obvious to the reason of mankind as any matter of fact that is before us. So that it is not only the reason, but also the experience of mankind that universally agrees and consents to this great truth, that there is such a good in virtuous, and such an evil in vicious actions, as doth eternally and inseparably cleave to their natures.

And therefore since our nature is to continue the same for ever; the same virtues and vices which are now the perfection and depravation, and consequently the happiness and misery of it, will be so for ever. From whence it necessarily follows, that our eternal happiness and misery is founded in the course of our actions: so that as in the course of a virtuous life we are growing up into a state of fixed and everlasting virtue, wherein we shall be everlastingly perfect and happy; so on the contrary, in a course of vicious actions, we are sinking into a state of everlasting viciousness, wherein we shall be everlastingly wretched and miserable. For since virtue is good for, and vice evil to us in its own nature; it neces-

sarily follows, that according as we remain virtuous or vicious for ever, our condition must be good or evil for ever. And this being so, of what unspeakable consequence are the actions of men, that thus draw after them a chain of joys or woes as long as eternity! And how careful ought we to be, to what course of life we determine ourselves, considering that our eternal fate depends upon what we are now doing; that every moral action we perform is a step heaven or hellwards; that in every bad or good choice we make, we are planting our tophet or our paradise; and that in the consequents of our present actions we shall rue or rejoice to eternal ages! O would to God men would at last be so wise as to consider these things before it be too late, and not live at random as they do without any regard to the certain and unavoidable fate of their own actions! For doubtless, would they but throughly weigh the nature and event of things, and look before they leap into action, they would see infinitely more charm and terror in that good and evil which inseparably adheres to virtuous and vicious actions, than in all the temptations in the world. Wherefore, in the name of God, let us look about us, and for once resolve to act like beings that must for ever feel the bad or good effects of our own doings. Which if we do, we shall not only live well and happily here, but to all eternity experience the blessed consequents of it.

SECT. II.

That God hath sufficiently discovered to us what those human actions are which are morally good, and upon that account perpetually obliging.

THE truth of which will evidently appear by con-

sidering the particulars, what it is that God hath done in order to the making this great discovery to us; the most considerable of which are reducible to these six heads:

First, He hath implanted in us a natural desire of happiness.

Secondly, He hath given us reason to discern what actions they are that make for our happiness, and what not.

Thirdly, He hath so contrived our natures, as that we are thrust on by our own instincts and passions to those actions which make for our happiness.

Fourthly, He hath taken care to excite and oblige us to those actions, by annexing natural rewards to them, and entailing natural punishments on their contraries.

Fifthly, To strengthen and enforce this obligation, he hath frequently superadded to these natural rewards and punishments supernatural blessings and judgments.

Sixthly, That to enforce all this, he hath made sundry supernatural revelations, wherein he hath plainly told us what those things are that carry with them this intrinsic good and necessity.

I. God hath taken care to discover to us what is morally good, by implanting in us a natural desire of happiness, which is so inseparable to human nature, that it is impossible for us to forbear desiring what is good for us, or at least what appears so. For though through our own ignorance and inconsideration we many times mistake evil for good, and misery for happiness; yet such is the frame of our nature, that we cannot desire evil as evil, or misery as misery; but whensoever we embrace a real evil, it is either under the notion of a less evil, or of a real

and substantial good. Now by this unquenchable thirst and desire of happiness which God hath implanted in our nature, we are continually importuned and excited to search out and inquire by what ways and means we may arrive to be happy. So that as hunger and thirst, and the sense of bodily pain and pleasure, force men upon the invention of trades and civil occupations, to supply their necessities and conveniences; so this vehement hunger and thirst after happiness, which God hath created in our bosoms, doth almost necessitate and constrain us to pry into the nature of our actions, that so we may discover what trade and course of life it is that tends most directly to our own felicity. And by thus importuning us by our own self-love to inquire into the nature of our actions, and into their natural tendencies to our weal or woe, he hath not only expressed his good-will towards us, by taking security of ourselves for our own welfare, and obliging us to be happy by the most tender and vigorous passion in our natures; but hath also taken an effectual course to discover to us the good and evil of our own actions; considering,

II. That he hath given us reason, to discern what actions they are that make for our happiness, and what not. It is true, had he only implanted in our breasts a blind desire of happiness, without any eye of reason in our heads to guide and direct our actions towards it, we must have wandered in the dark for ever, till we had pined away our wretched being with a hungry and unsatisfied desire. But by giving us a quicksighted faculty of reason to guide and conduct this our blind desire, he hath taken sufficient care, not only to excite our inquiry after the way to

happiness, but also to enable us to find it. For the natural tendencies of our actions to our happiness or misery are so very obvious and visible, that we can scarce open our eyes and look abroad without observing them. For how can any man, who makes any observations upon things, be so stupid as not to discern the vast difference there is between truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, as to their natural tendency to the good and hurt, happiness and misery of mankind? It is true, if men will neglect using their reason, they may be ignorant of the plainest propositions; but if they be, it is their inexcusable folly. But if men will be so true to their own interest, as calmly to reflect upon their actions, their sense cannot more readily distinguish between honey and gall, than their reason will between virtue and vice; the fundamental reasons of which are so legible in all the appearances of nature, so necessary to the being and preservation of mankind, and their equity is so apparent, and their convenience so obvious, that a man can hardly reflect upon any thing either within or without him, without being convinced of their force and obligation. So that for a man that hath the use of his reason not to observe the difference of his actions, as to their intrinsic good and evil, and necessary tendency to his happiness and misery, would be as gross and unexcusable a stupidity, as if he should pass through the world without ever taking notice that two and two makes four. God therefore, by giving us a reasonable faculty to discern the nature of things, upon which the differences of good and evil are so plainly and legibly imprinted, hath hereby taken sufficient care to shew us the difference of our own actions. For to inspire us with

a faculty of reasoning, by which we can form true notions of things from single experiments, and infer one truth from another, and immediately to inspire this faculty with divine truth, are only two different modes of divine revelation; and God did as really reveal himself to us, when he gave us reason to understand his will, as when he sent to us his messenger from heaven to make known his mind and will to us. For God hath so framed our understandings, as that whensoever we impartially reason about things, we are forced to distinguish between good and evil, and cannot persuade ourselves, without doing infinite violence to our own faculties, that to blaspheme God or to reverence him, lie or speak truth, to honour our parents, or to scorn and despise them, are things of an indifferent nature; but as soon as ever we open the eye of our reason, we discern such an essential difference between them, as forces us to condemn the one and approve the other. And accordingly, as for the greatest strokes of iniquity, we find they have as much the universal judgment of our reason against them, as any false conclusion in the mathematics; whilst the goodness of their contrary virtues is as universally acknowledged by us, as the truth of any first principle in philosophy. Since therefore God hath so framed our understanding, as that it cannot calmly reflect upon our actions without distinguishing between the good and bad, he hath hereby sufficiently revealed to us what that good is that immutably binds and obliges us.

III. God hath so contrived our natures, as that we are thrust on by our own instincts and passions to those actions which are morally good, and do make

for our happiness. For we are framed and constituted with such passions and affections as do naturally point and direct us unto virtuous actions; and though by the constitution of our natures, our passions are subjected to our reason, and all our virtue consists in being reasonably affected; yet in the very nature of our passions there is a certain tendency and direction to virtue, antecedent to all our reasoning and discourse. Which Theognes the Pythagorean styles παρόρμησις, καὶ ἐνθουσιασμὸς τὰς κατὰ φύσιν ἀρετᾶς, "a certain natural impetus or enthusiasm, by which, without any previous discourse or deliberation, we are forcibly carried on towards virtuous actions." For some affections there are in our nature which do in the general plainly signify to us, that there is such a thing as moral good and evil in human actions; and others that do plainly point out what those actions are wherein this moral good and evil is subjected. Of the first sort are the affections of love and hatred, complacency and horror, glory and shame, repentance and self-satisfaction; which plainly declare that there are answerable objects in the nature of things and actions; that there is a good to be beloved, and an evil to be hated; a deformity to be abhorred, and a beauty to be delighted in; an excellency to be gloried in, and a filthiness to be ashamed of; a well-doing to be satisfied with, and an ill-doing to be repented of. For if there were no such real distinctions in the nature of things and actions, all these affections in us would be utterly vain and impertinent. And as these affections of our nature do signify in the general, that there is a moral good and evil in our actions; so there are others, which do

particularly point out what actions are morally good, and what evil. Thus, for instance, the passions of veneration and disdain do plainly direct us to honour God and our superiors, and to be constant in good courses out of a generous scorn of all temptations to the contrary. Thus commiseration and envy direct us to charity and justice, to lament and assist those who are undeservedly unfortunate, and to be displeased with the advancement of base and undeserving people; and consequently to be just and equal in our distributions, and to proportion them to men's merit and desert. For by this passion of envy nature teaches us, that there is such a thing as just and unjust, equal and unequal, and that the former is to be embraced, and the latter to be shunned. And to name no more, thus sorrow and joy do by silent language dissuade us from injuring, and persuade us to benefit one another. For so by the mournful voice, the dejected eyes and countenance, the sighs and groans and tears of the sorrowful and oppressed, (all which are the powerful rhetoric of nature,) we are importuned, not only to forbear heaping any further injuries upon them, but also to commiserate their griefs, and by our timely aids to succour and relieve them. As on the contrary the florid and cheerful looks, the pleasant and grateful air, which we behold in those that rejoice, are so many charms and attractives, by which nature allures us to mutual urbanity and sweetness of behaviour, and a continual study to please and gratify one another. By these and many other instances I might give, it is evident, that though by our own ill government we too often deprave our affections, and corrupt them into vices, yet their natural drift and tendency lies towards virtue. Thus

by their own natural light which they carry before us, they direct our steps to the way we are to walk in, and point out all those tracts of eternal goodness that lead to our happiness. For since these affections are in us antecedently to all our deliberations and choices, it is evident they were placed there by the Author of our natures; and therefore since it is he who hath inclined them to all that they naturally incline to, he doth in effect direct and guide us by their inclinations. So that their natural tendencies and directions are the voice of God in our natures, which murmurs and whispers to us that natural law which our reason indeed doth more plainly and articulately promulge. And from this natural tendency of our affections to good, proceeds that pleasant and painful sense of good and bad actions, which we experience in ourselves before ever we can discourse. For thus, before we are capable of reasoning ourselves into any pleasure or displeasure, our nature is rejoiced in a kind of just action either in ourselves or others; and we are sensibly pleased when we have pleasured those that oblige us, and as sensibly grieved when we are conscious of having grieved and offended them. We love to see those fare well who we imagine have deserved well; and when any unjust violence is offered them, our nature shrinks at and abhors it. We pity and compassionate the miserable when we know not why; and are ready to offer at their relief, when we can give no reason for it: which shews that these things proceed not either from our education or deliberate choice, but from the nature of our affections, which have a sympathy with virtue and an antipathy to vice implanted in our very constitution. And hence it is, that, in the beginnings

of sin, our nature is commonly so shy of an evil action; that it approaches it with such a modest coyness, and goes blushing to it like a bashful virgin to an adulterer's bed; that it passes into it with such regret and reluctancy, and looks back upon it with such shame and confusion; which in our tender years, when as yet we are not arrived to the exercise of our understandings, cannot be supposed to proceed from reason and conscience, and therefore must be from the natural sense of our affections, which by these and such like indications do signify that they are violated and offended. Now this natural sense of good and evil, which springs from the frame and nature of our affections, was doubtless intended by God to be the first guide of human nature; that so, when as yet it is not capable of following reason and conscience, it might be directed to what is good, and preserved from wicked habits and prejudices by its own sense and feeling, till such time as it is capable of the conduct of reason; that so, when this leading faculty undertakes the charge of it, it may find it pliant and obsequious to its dictates; and be able to manage it with more ease and facility; and that, by the natural drift and tendency of our affections, God hath plainly revealed to us what is good and what not.

IV. God hath also entailed upon our actions natural rewards and punishments, and thereby plainly declared which are good and which evil. For it is easily demonstrable, by an induction of particulars, that every virtue hath some natural efficacy in it to advance both our public good and our private interest. That temperance and charity, righteousness and fidelity, gratitude and humility, are not only con-

venient, but absolutely necessary to our joy and comfort, our peace and quietness, our safety and contentment; to the health of our body and the satisfaction of our mind, and the security and happiness of our society with one another. Whereas, on the contrary, vice naturally teems with mischievous effects, and is ever productive of horror in the conscience, anguish in the mind, discord in the affections, diseases in the body, and confusions and disturbances in human society. Since therefore the divine wisdom and contrivance hath thus inseparably coupled good effects to good actions and evil ones to evil, it hath hereby very plainly and sensibly declared to us, what it would have us do, and what not. For seeing it hath so constituted things, as that, in the course of nature, such proportions of happiness do necessarily result to us from such actions, and such proportions of misery from their contraries, what can be more evident than that its design was hereby to encourage us to the one, and affright us from the other? So that, by these natural rewards and punishments, which in the course of things God hath chained to our actions, he hath as expressly prescribed us what to do and what not, as he could have done if he had spoken to us in an audible voice from the battlements of heaven. For since the whole train of natural effects is to be resolved into the providence of God, and since his providence hath so ordered and contrived things, as that in the ordinary course of them good effects do spring out of good actions, and evil of evil ones, what else could he intend by it, but to allure us to the one, and terrify us from the other? For it is by rewards and punishments that all lawgivers declare their will and pleasure concerning those actions which they

command and forbid. And therefore, since God in his providential government of the world hath thought good to link natural rewards to such actions, and natural punishments to such, these are to be looked upon as the great sanctions of the law of nature, whereby he commands what pleases, and prohibits what displeases him. For when God had no otherwise revealed himself to the world, than only by the established course and nature of things, that was the great bible by which alone mankind was instructed in their duty; and there being no revealed threats or promises annexed to good and bad actions, God's will and pleasure concerning them was visible only in the good and bad consequents which they drew after them; which are so plain and obvious to the observation of mankind, that it would be the most inexcusable inadvertency not to take notice of them. So that the moral good and evil of all actions finally resolves into the natural good and evil that is appendant to them; and therefore are our actions morally good, because they are naturally beneficial to us, and therefore morally evil, because they are naturally prejudicial and hurtful; and those, which in their own nature are neither good nor evil, are indifferent in themselves, and left altogether undetermined by the law of nature, which commands and forbids nothing but under the sanction of those natural rewards and punishments, which in the course of things are made necessary to human actions.

V. To these natural rewards and punishments which God hath entailed upon good and bad actions, he hath thought good many times to superadd supernatural blessings and judgments. For though he had

before sufficiently expressed his will concerning human actions in the great bible of nature, and by their natural effects had plainly enough distinguished the good from the bad; yet considering what heedless and inobservant creatures we are, and how apt to overlook the ordinary consequents of our actions, he hath not altogether abandoned us to the easy instructions of nature, but out of his superabundant care to shew us what is good, and lead us to our duty and happiness, he hath from time to time seconded the natural rewards and punishments of our actions with supernatural favours and judgments; that so by these he might awake our drowsy attention, and revive in us the languishing sense of our duty. Of which we have infinite instances in the several ages of the world; there being scarce any history, either sacred or profane, that abounds not with them. Several of which, both blessings and judgments, do as plainly evince themselves to be intended by God for rewards and punishments, as if they had been attended with a voice from heaven proclaiming the reasons for which they were sent. For how many famous instances have we of miraculous deliverances of righteous persons, who by an invisible hand have been rescued from the greatest dangers, when in all outward appearance their condition was hopeless and desperate; and of wonderful blessings that have happened to them, not only without, but contrary to, all secondary causes; of some that have been so eminently rewarded in kind, as that the goods which they received were most visible significations of the goods which they did; and others who have received the blessings which they have asked whilst they were praying for them, and ob-

tained them with such distinguishing circumstances, as plainly signified them to be the answers and returns of their devout addresses to Heaven! And so on the contrary, how many notable examples are there of such miraculous judgments inflicted upon unrighteous persons, as have either exceeded the power of secondary causes, or been caused by them contrary to their natural tendencies! Of men that have been punished in the very act of their sin, and sometimes in the very part by which they have offended; that have had the evil of their sin retaliated upon them in a correspondent evil of suffering, and been struck with those very judgments which they have imprecated on themselves in the justification of a known falsehood! All which supernatural judgments and blessings of God are only his comments on the text of nature, by which he further explains to us the meaning of those natural rewards and punishments which virtue and vice draw after them, and shews us what clear indications they are of his almighty pleasure and displeasure. For when he rewards men supernaturally, it is for those actions that carry a natural reward with them; and when he punishes them supernaturally, it is for such actions as do carry a natural punishment with them: so that his supernatural rewards and punishments do speak the same sense and language with his natural, only they speak plainer and louder, to rouse and awake those stupid souls that are deaf to and regardless of the soft and still voice of natural rewards and punishments. Thus when the old world, by not attending to the natural consequents of their own actions, had almost extinguished their sense of good and evil, God by a supernatural deluge, in which he drowned the

wicked and preserved the righteous, consigned to all future generations a standing monument of his hatred of sin and love of righteousness; that so by the remembrance of it he might keep men's heedless minds more attentive to the natural rewards and punishments of their actions. And when the remembrance of this was almost worn out, and with it men's natural sense of good and evil, God by raining down fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and rescuing the righteous Lot from that dire conflagration, alarmed the world with a new declaration of the wide distinction he makes between virtue and vice. And lastly, when the virtue of these great examples was almost spent, God raised up the people of Israel, and by the miraculous blessings he bestowed on them when they did well, and the stupendous judgments he inflicted when they did wickedly, exposed them to all the nations round about for a standing demonstration of the vast difference he makes between good and evil. For so the Psalmist tells us, Psalm xcvi. verse 2. compared with Psalm cii. verse 15. *The Lord hath made known his salvation, his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen; that the heathen might fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth his glory.* Thus by frequent examples of supernatural rewards and punishments, God hath been always instructing the degenerate world in the essential differences between good and evil.

VI. And lastly, to enforce all this, God hath made sundry supernatural revelations, wherein he hath plainly instructed us what actions are good and what evil. That he hath made sundry revelations to the

world is evident in the fact, because there are sundry revelations extant, which, by those many miraculous effects of the divine power that attended the ministration of them, have been sufficiently demonstrated to be of a divine original. And such are those contained in the five books of Moses, and the prophets, which have been all most amply confirmed, both by the miracles which were wrought by their inspired authors, and the exact accomplishment of the several predictions contained in them. And such is also the last and best revelation contained in the New Testament; which both by the types and predictions of the law and prophets, and the infinite miracles wrought by Jesus and his followers, together with its own inherent wisdom and goodness, hath been so effectually proved a divine revelation, that nothing but ignorance or inveterate prejudice can cause any man to disbelieve or suspect it.

Now if you consult these several revelations you will find, that the main drift and design of them is to detect and expose what is morally evil, and explain and recommend to us what is morally good. For thus the several revelations made to Abraham and his children were only so many repetitions of that covenant of righteousness which God had struck with them, to encourage them to persevere in well-doing. Thus the law of Moses consisted partly of ceremonial rites, which were either intended for divine hieroglyphics, to instruct that dull and stupid people in the principles of inward purity and goodness, or else for types and figures of the holy mysteries of the gospel; and partly of precepts of morality, together with some few of policy, suited to the genius of that people; and partly of such promises and threats as were judged most apt to oblige them

to the practice of piety. And as for the prophets, the substance of their revelations was either reprehensions of sin, together with severe denunciations against it; or invitations to virtue and piety, together with gracious promises to encourage them to practise it; or predictions of the Messias, and of that everlasting righteousness which was to be introduced by him. And then as for the gospel, all the duty of it consists either in instances, or means and instruments of moral goodness; and all the doctrines of it are nothing but powerful arguments to oblige us to the practice of those duties. Thus the great intendment of all God's revelations is to explain and enforce the duties of morality; to discover the nature, and lead us on to the practice of them by the most powerful obligations. And in this most perfect map of the road to happiness, all the tracts of piety and virtue are so plainly described and delineated to us, that no man can possibly miss his way, that sincerely inquires after it. For though in matters of opinion men may be innocently misled and deceived, yet there is no article either of doctrine or duty, upon which our happiness necessarily depends, wherein it is possible for an honest and diligent mind to be mistaken. And thus you see by how many excellent ways God hath discovered to us which of our actions are good, and which evil. So that if, after all this, we proceed in any sinful and immoral courses, we are utterly inexcusable. For if after God hath thus plainly made known his will to us, we still persist to contradict it in our practice, we do thereby in effect declare, that we regard not the Almighty, and that we will do what we list, let him will what he pleases. And what an unpardonable insolence is it for us, who depend upon his

breath, and hang upon his providence every moment, to treat him as if he had nothing to do with us, and were the merest cipher and most insignificant being in the world! For though it is true he hath not made so full a discovery of his will to some as to others, yet he hath so sufficiently discovered it to all, that none can pretend to the excuse either of invincible or unaffected ignorance. For as for the heathen, though they have no revelation of God's will without them, yet they have the bible of conscience within them, and the large and legible bible of nature that lies continually open before them, in which they may easily read the principal differences between good and evil, and all the great principles of morality. And if notwithstanding this they will be so regardless of God as not to attend to and comply with those natural discoveries of his will, what pretence can be made for them, why they should not perish for ever in their obstinacy? For, as the apostle tells us, *though they had not the law*, that is, the revealed law, yet they did, or at least might have done, *by nature the things contained in the law; and therefore as many of them*, saith he, *as sinned without this revealed law, shall perish without the law*, that is, by the sentence of the law of nature, Rom. ii. 12, 14. And then as for the Jews, besides those natural indications of God's will which they had in common with the heathen, they had sundry supernatural ones; they had sundry great and notorious examples of God's rewarding good men and punishing bad; and besides, they had the law of Moses, the moral part of which was but a new edition of the law of nature; as for the ceremonial part of it, it was thought an obscure, yet an intelligible

representation of all those sublime motives to piety and virtue, which the gospel more plainly proposed. So that would the Jews but have heedfully attended either to the spiritual sense of their law, or to the sermons of their prophets which very much cleared and explained it, they could not have been ignorant either of any material part of their duty, or of any considerable motive by which it is pressed and enforced. And if notwithstanding they would be so regardless of God, as to take no notice of his judgments and mercies; so rude to his authority, as not to mind either his law within, or his law without them, upon what reasonable pretence can they excuse themselves? But then as to us Christians, we have not only all those natural discoveries of our duty which the heathen had, and all those supernatural ones which the Jews had, but a great deal more. For in our revelation the laws and motives of virtue are set before us in a much clearer light, and are neither wrapt up in mystical senses, nor overcast with typical representations, but laid before us in the most plain and easy propositions. For that which was the mystical sense of the Jewish law, is the literal sense of the Christian; in which all those precepts and promises and threats, which were delivered to the Jews in dark riddles, obscure and typical adumbrations, are brought forth to us from behind the curtain, and proposed in plain and popular articles. So that if we still continue in our sinful courses, we are of all men the most inexcusable. The heathen may plead against the Jews, that their law of nature was not so clear in its precepts, nor yet so cogent in its motives as the law of Moses; the Jews may plead against us Christians,

that their law of Moses was neither so express in the precepts, nor yet so intelligible in its best and most powerful motives, as our gospel: but as for us Christians, we have nothing to plead; but by our own obstinacy against the clearest discoveries of our duty do stand condemned to everlasting silence. So that when it shall appear, at the dread tribunal of God, that we have persisted in our wickedness notwithstanding all these advantages, we must expect to be reproached by all the reasonable world, to be exploded and hissed at, not only by saints and angels, but by the Jews and the gentiles, and the devils themselves, who will all conspire with our own consciences, to second our woful doom with the loud acclamation of, *Just and righteous art thou, O Lord, in all thy ways.* Wherefore, as we would not perish for ever without pity and excuse, let us make haste to forsake *all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.*

SECT. III.

That those actions which carry with them this perpetual obligation are the main and principal parts of religion.

THE truth of which is most evident from the abovenamed text, Micah vi. 8. *And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Which interrogation, though it implies not an absolute negation, viz. that the Lord required nothing else of them, (for under the law he required sacrifices, and sundry other positive duties, as under the gospel he requires sacraments, and reading and hearing his holy

word, &c. which are positive duties, as well as those legal institutions of Moses;) yet it plainly implies a comparative negation, viz. that the Lord requires nothing else so principally and affectionately, so for the sake of things themselves, and upon the account of their own inherent beauty and goodness, as he doth these moral duties here specified. He did indeed require the Jews to offer sacrifice to him, and to perform those other ceremonial rites specified in the law of Moses; and for them wilfully to have neglected those duties would have been such an avowed defiance to his authority, as would have rendered them justly obnoxious to all the judgments threatened in their law; but yet he did much more earnestly require them to be just and merciful and humble, and manifested himself to be far better pleased with one act of moral goodness than with a thousand sacrifices. And thus he requires of us Christians, that we should communicate with him and with one another in our evangelical sacraments, and dutifully conform to all those sacred institutions and solemnities of religion which are contained in the gospel; and if we wilfully neglect them, we justly incur all that everlasting vengeance which is there denounced; but yet our sincere compliance with the immutable obligations of piety and virtue is a thousandfold more acceptable to God, than our strictest observation of these his positive institutions. So that the question in the text, *What doth the Lord require of thee?* plainly implies this proposition, that though God doth exact of us certain duties which are not moral, i. e. have no intrinsic necessity in them, yet it is the moral duties, such as justice and mercy and humility, which he principally requires at our

hand. Thus concerning sacrifice, God plainly tells us, *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*, i. e. I will have mercy rather than sacrifice, Hosea vi. 6. And the wise man assures us, that *to do justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice*, Prov. xxi. 3. And to the same purpose our Saviour himself pronounceth, even before that ceremonial worship was abolished, that *to love the Lord with all our heart, with all our understanding, with all our soul, and with all our strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices*, Mark xii. 33. But for the clearer demonstration of this great and necessary truth, I shall endeavour, first, to prove the truth of it by some scripture arguments; secondly, to assign the reasons of it. As for the proof of it, the following particulars will be abundantly sufficient.

First, That the scripture plainly declares, that the great design of all the doctrinals of religion hath always been, to move and persuade men to the practice of moral goodness.

Secondly, That the main drift and scope of all the positive duties of religion hath been always to improve and perfect men to moral goodness.

Thirdly, That God expresses in scripture a great contempt of all the positive duties of religion, whenever they are separated from moral goodness.

Fourthly, That wherever we find the whole of religion summed up in a few particulars, they are always such as are instances of moral goodness.

Fifthly, That wherever such persons as have been most dear and acceptable to God are described in scripture, their characters always consist of some instances or other of moral goodness.

Sixthly, That the scripture plainly declares, that at the great account between God and our souls, the main inquisition will be concerning our moral good or evil.

I. The scriptures expressly declare, that the great design of the doctrines of religion is to move and persuade men to moral goodness. For so the apostle speaking of the *grace of God*, i. e. the gospel, assures us that its great design is, *to teach men to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*, Titus ii. 12. And if we consider the doctrines in particular, we shall find that they all conspire in this great design. For so the doctrine of eternal life is proposed by God, to persuade us to *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God*, 2 Cor. vii. 1. So also the doctrine of our future punishment is leveled against *all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men*, Rom. i. 18. And as for those doctrines which concern the transactions of our Saviour, they are all proposed to us as arguments to persuade us to piety and virtue. For it was *for this cause that Christ was manifested, to destroy the works of the Devil*, 1 John iii. 8. It was for this purpose that *he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin should live to righteousness*, 1 Pet. ii. 24. It was for this end that he *rose from the dead*, that thereby he might prevail with us to *walk in newness of life*, Rom. vi. 4. And it is for this end that he intercedes for us at the right hand of God, that thereby he might encourage us *to come to God by him*, Heb. vii. 25. And in a word, for this cause, he hath told us, he will come to judgment, to reward every man ac-

cording to his works, that thereby he might stir us up to sobriety and vigilance, and to *all holy conversation and godliness*, Matt. xxiv. 42. compared with 2 Pet. iii. 12. Thus you see all the doctrines of religion are only so many topics of divine persuasion, whereby God addresses himself to our hope and fear, and every other affection in us that is capable of persuasion, to excite us to comply with the eternal obligations of morality; and there is no one article in all our religion that is matter of mere speculation, or that entertains our minds with dry and empty notions that have no influence on our wills and affections. For since the design of religion in general is to bind and fasten our souls to God, we may be sure that there is no part of it but what doth in some measure contribute hereunto. Since therefore it is moral goodness that God chiefly recommends to us by the persuasions of religion, we may be sure that what his arguments do chiefly persuade us to, that his commands do chiefly oblige us to.

II. From scripture it is also evident, that the main drift and scope of all the positive duties of religion is to improve and perfect men in moral goodness. We find the Jewish religion exceedingly abounded with positive precepts; for such were all those sacred rites and solemnities of which the bark and outside of that religion consisted; of all which it is true what the Psalmist saith of sacrifices in particular, *Thou desirest not sacrifices, thou delightest not in burnt offerings*, Psalm li. 16. that is, thou takest no delight in them, upon the score of any internal goodness that is in them, but desirest them merely as they are instituted means and instruments of moral goodness. For so many of the rites of the

Mosaic law were instituted in opposition to the magical, unclean, and idolatrous rites of the eastern heathen. As particularly that prohibition *of sowing their fields with mingled seed*, Lev. xix. 19. in opposition to that magical rite which the heathens used as a charm for fructification. So also that command of sprinkling the blood of their sacrifices upon the ground like water, and covering it with dust, in opposition to that idolatrous rite of gathering the blood into a trench or vessel, and then sitting round it in a circle, whilst they imagined their gods to be licking it up. And to name no more of this kind, the prohibition of *seething a kid in his mother's milk*, Exod. xxiii. 19. was in opposition to a custom of the ancient heathens, who at the ingathering of their fruits were wont to take a kid and seethe it in the milk of its dam, and then in a magical procession to sprinkle all their trees and fields and gardens with it, thereby to render them more fruitful the following year. Besides all which, you may find a world of other instances in Maimonides, More Nevoch. l. iii. who tells us, that the knowledge of the opinions and customs of these eastern churches was *porta magna ad reddendas præceptorum causas*, "the great ra-" tionale of the Mosaic precepts;" and that *multarum legum rationes et causæ mihi innotuerint ex cognitione fidei rituum et cultus Zabiorum*, i. e. "that by" being acquainted with the opinions and customs of" those eastern heathens, he understood the grounds" and reasons of many of the laws of Moses," *More Nevoch.* lib. iii. cap. 29. So that though these precepts were not moral, yet were they set up as so many fences by God to keep the people from straggling into those heathenish immoralities.

Again, there are other rites of their religion which were instituted to shadow out the holy mysteries of the gospel; the great design of which mysteries was to invite and persuade men to comply with the eternal laws of morality. Thus their laws of sacrifice were instituted to represent to them the great transactions of their future Messias; his incarnation and immaculate life, his death and resurrection, ascension and intercession at the right hand of God. So also their festival laws, and particularly their laws of jubilee, were made to shadow out their doctrines of our redemption and eternal life; and their pouring out water in their sacrifices, and their ritual purgations from uncleanness, were intended for obscure intimations of the effusion of the Holy Spirit, and the doctrine of remission of sins; all which doctrines carry with them the most pregnant invitations to piety and virtue.

Lastly, There are other rites of that law which were appointed to instruct them in moral duties. For God finding them not only a perverse, but a dull and sottish people, as those generally are that have been born and bred in slavery, apprehended that the most effectual way to instruct them would be by signs and material representations, even as parents do their children by pictures. And accordingly in Isa. xxviii. 10. he tells us, that *he gave them line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, with a stammering tongue;* i. e. he looked upon them as children, and so condescended to their weakness, and spake to them in their own dialect. And this way of instructing them by outward and visible signs, being much in use in the eastern countries, and more espe-

cially in Egypt, whose manners they were infinitely fond of, was of all others the most probable and taking. And accordingly a great part of the Jewish rites consisted of hieroglyphics, or visible signs, by which their minds were instructed in the precepts of morality. Thus by circumcision, God signified to them the necessity of mortifying their unchaste desires; by their legal washings, he intimated to them their obligations to cleanse themselves from all impurities of flesh and spirit; yea this, as St. Barnabas in his epistle tells us, was the intent of all that difference of meats in the Jewish law, which pronounced swine's flesh unclean, to instruct them not to live like hogs, that wallow in the mire while they are full, and whine and clamour when they are empty; which forbid them to feed on eagles and other birds of prey, to instruct them to live by honest industry, and not by rapine; which prohibits fish without scales, that generally live in the mud, to teach the evil of sensuality and earthly-mindedness, &c. From all which it is evident, that moral goodness was the constant mark at which all the positive precepts of their law were levelled.

And then as for the Christian religion, all the positive precepts it contains are directed to the same end. It requires us to believe in Jesus Christ, and in his mediation to *draw near unto God;* the design of which faith, it expressly tells us, is to *sanctify our natures,* Acts xxvi. 18. and to *purify our hearts,* Acts xv. 9. It enjoins us to be baptized into the name of Jesus; and for what purpose, but to oblige us thereby to *die to sin, and to walk in newness of life?* Rom. vi. 4. It requires us to commemorate our Saviour's passion in a sacramental

communion of his body and blood; and to what end, but only to excite us to love and thankfulness to God, and charity towards one another? 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. In a word, it requires us to live in unity with the church, and not to separate ourselves from her sacred assemblies; and for what other reason, but that we might become *an holy temple, and an habitation of God*, by being compacted together into an uniform and regular society? Ephes. ii. 21, 22. Since therefore all the precepts both of the Old and New Testament, which are purely positive, do bear a respect to moral goodness, and were imposed by God in subserviency thereunto, it is evident that that is the principal mark which he designs and aims at.

III. Another evidence from Scripture that moral goodness is the principal matter of our duty, is the great contempt which God expresses of the positive duties of religion, whenever they are separated from moral goodness. For thus, concerning the positives of the Jewish religion, we are told, that *the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord*, Prov. xv. 8. And concerning the whole of their positive religion, the prophet thus pronounces, in the name of God, *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and of the fat of fed beasts;* i. e. so full as that I loathe them: *and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required these things at your hands, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meetings.*

Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble to me; I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. And what, I beseech you, is the reason that God should thus dislike his own institutions? Why he plainly tells you; *Your hands are full of blood;* your cruelty and oppression doth profane your worship, and turn it all into impiety, Isa. i. 11. to the 16th; for so, Isa. lxvi. 3. he plainly tells them, *He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol:* and why so? why, *they have chosen their own ways,* i. e. of impiety and wickedness, and *their soul delighteth in their abominations.* Nor doth God express a less contempt of the positives of Christianity when separated from moral goodness: for thus St. James tells us, even of our faith or belief in Jesus, that *without works it is dead;* that it is a senseless, squalid thing, that hath neither life nor beauty in it, James ii. 17. and St. Peter compares baptism to the washing of a swine, when it is separated from purity of life and manners, 2 Pet. ii. 22. and our receiving the Lord's supper, without charity and devotion, is by St. Paul styled, *coming together to condemnation,* 1 Cor. xi. 34. all which is a plain demonstration, that moral goodness is the principal matter that God insists on; since it was this that sanctified the sacrifices of the Jews, and crowned all the ceremonial observances with the divine acceptation, and without this all their other sacrifices were noisome and

offensive to him; and it is this that perfumes our faith and our sacraments, our prayers and religious assemblies, and renders them a grateful and sweet-smelling savour in the nostrils of God; and without this they are all a hateful stench and annoyance to him. Doubtless, therefore, the principal matter of duty which God requires of us is that which he esteems the grace and fragrancy of all other duties.

IV. Another evidence from scripture that moral goodness is the principal matter that God requires of us is, that wherever we find the whole of religion summed up in a few particulars they are always such as are parts and instances of moral goodness. Thus in the above-cited Micah vi. *What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Thus also the prophet Isaiah, giving an account to his people what they were to do in order to their reconciliation with God, thus directs them; *Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord:* Isa. i. 16, 17, 18. So also our blessed Saviour sums up the whole duty of man into two particulars: and what are they? Why, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets:* Matt. xxii. 37—40. Thus St. James; *True religion and undefiled before God and the Father*

is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world, James i. 27. And elsewhere the apostle sums up the whole law into one leading head of morality, and that is love; *for love,* saith he, *is the fulfilling of the law,* Rom. xiii. 10. So this observation generally holds true, that in all those summaries of duty mentioned in the holy scripture, only such duties are taken notice of as are parts and instances of morality; which is a plain demonstration, that it is this which God principally requires, since it is this which he most takes notice of; and it may be reasonably supposed, that in those summaries of our duty, wherein but a few parts are enumerated, they are such as are the chief and principal; it being contrary to all rules of language to express the whole of any thing by the meanest and most inconsiderable parts of it.

V. Another evidence from scripture, that moral goodness is the principal matter of duty that God requires of us, is, that wheresoever such persons as have been most dear and acceptable to God are described, their character is always made up of instances of morality. Thus the description of Job is, *that he was a man perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil,* Job i. 1. And in the xvth Psalm, the description which David gives of the man who should abide in the tabernacle of the Lord is this, that *he walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart; that he backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour,* &c. *He that doth these things,* saith he, *shall never be moved.* And the

greatest character that is given of Moses, the darling and favourite of God, is, that *he was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth*, Numb. xii. 3. Thus also the character of Cornelius, by which he was so endeared to God, is, that *he was a just and devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway*, Acts x. 2. And, in a word, the general character of those whom God accepts is, *In every nation, he who doth righteousness is accepted of God*, Acts x. 35. Thus moral goodness is the great stamp and impress that renders men current in the esteem of God; whereas, on the contrary, the common brand by which hypocrites and false pretenders to religion are stigmatized is, their being zealous for the positives, and cold and indifferent as to the morals of religion. But so our Saviour characters the Pharisees; *Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin*, which yet was a positive duty, *and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, ye strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel*, Matt. xxiii. 23, 24. plainly implying the morals of religion to exceed the positives in weight and moment, as much as a camel does a gnat in bulk. Since therefore moral goodness is always mentioned as the great character of God's favourites, and the neglect of it, out of a pretended zeal to the positive duties of religion, is always recorded as a mark of the most odious hypocrites; this is a sufficient argument how high a value God sets upon the moralities of religion.

VI. And lastly, another evidence from scripture, that moral goodness is the principal part of religion, is, that at the great account between God and us, his main inquisition will be concerning such actions as are morally good or evil. For so, Rom. ii. 6. we are told, that God will *render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for honour and glory and immortality, eternal life: but to them who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguish.* And accordingly, Enoch, as he is quoted by St. Jude, verse 14, 15. declares this to be the occasion of the Lord's coming with thousands of his saints, viz. *to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him;* all which are matters of fact against the eternal rules of morality. And our Saviour himself, in that popular scheme and description he gives of proceedings of the day of judgment, plainly declares, that one of the principal matters he will then inquire into, will be our neglect or observance of that great moral duty of charity towards the poor and needy, Matt. xxv. 31—46. which is a plain evidence, that our obeying or disobeying the eternal laws of morality is that by which we do most please or displease God; since it is upon this that he will most insist in his final arbitration of our eternal fate. For since his last judgment is only the final execution of his laws, we may be sure, that whatsoever it is that he will principally insist on in his judgment, that is the

principal matter of his laws. And now having sufficiently proved the truth of the proposition, I proceed to the reasons of it; upon what accounts it is, that God hath made moral goodness the main and principal part of our religion. The chief reasons of which are these four.

First, Because it is by moral goodness that we do most honour him.

Secondly, Because it is by this that we do most imitate him.

Thirdly, Because it is by this that we advance to our own happiness.

Fourthly, When all our positive duty is ceased, this is to be the eternal work and business of our nature.

I. God hath made moral goodness the principal part of our religion, because it is by this that we do him the greatest honour. It is an excellent saying of Hierocles, Τιμὴν ποιεῖται τοῦ ἀνενδεοῦς ἡ τῶν ὑπ' ἐκείνου προτεινομένων ἀγαθῶν ὑποδοχή. οὐ γὰρ τιμήσεις τὸν Θεὸν διδούς τι αὐτῷ, ἀλλ' ἄξιος τοῦ λαβεῖν τὰ παρ' ἐκείνου γινόμενος: "The best honour we can do to a self-sufficient "being is to receive the good things he holds forth "unto us; and therefore it is not by giving to God "that you honour him, but by rendering yourselves "worthy to receive of him;" for, saith he, Ὅστις τιμᾷ τὸν Θεὸν ὡς προσδεόμενον, οὗτος λέληθεν οἰόμενος ἑαυτὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι κρείττονα: i. e. "Whosoever gives honour to "God as to one that wants, doth not consider that he "thereby sets himself above God." For by his own self-sufficiency he is infinitely removed above all capacity of want, and so can never need any additional contributions of glory and happiness from his creatures. For glory being nothing else but the resplen-

dency of perfection, which always reflects its own beams upon itself, wherever there is infinite perfection, (as to be sure there is in the nature of God,) there must an infinite glory proceed from it; and therefore being infinitely glorious in himself, it is impossible that any thing we do should add any farther glory to him. So that if we would truly honour and glorify him, it must not be by giving to, but by receiving from him. Now the best thing we can receive from God is himself; and himself we do receive in our strict compliance with the eternal laws of goodness. Which laws being transcribed from the nature of God, from his own eternal righteousness and goodness, we do by obeying them derive God's nature into ours. So that while we write after the copy of his laws, we write out the perfections of his being; and his laws being the seal upon which he hath engraven his nature, we do, in obeying them, take impression from him, and stamp his blessed nature on our own. For all those virtuous dispositions of mind which we acquire by the practice of virtue are so many genuine signatures of God, taken from the seal of his law, and participations of his nature. For so holiness, which consists in a conformity of soul with the eternal laws of goodness, is in scripture called the signature or impression of the Spirit of God, *whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption*, Ephes. iv. 30. and such as do righteousness are said to *be born of God*, 1 John ii. 29. which implies their deriving from him, who is their divine parent, a divine and godlike nature, even as children do their human nature from their human parents. So that by the practice of moral goodness we receive from God the best thing

he can bestow, viz. a divine and godlike nature; and consequently by so doing we render him the highest honour and glory. For since we can no otherwise honour him but by receiving from him, we doubtless do him the greatest honour when we receive himself, by partaking of the perfections of his nature, which are the greatest gift he can communicate to us. *Herein*, saith our Saviour, *is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit*, John xv. 8. Μόνος γὰρ οἶδε τιμᾷν ὁ προηγουμένως ἱερεῖον ἑαυτὸν προσάγων, saith the aforenamed philosopher; i. e. he only knows how to honour God who presents himself a sacrifice to him, carves his own soul into a divine image, and composes his mind into a temple for the entertainment of God, and the reception of the divine light and glory. It is then therefore that we best honour God, when by the practice of true godliness we conform our wills and affections to him; and derive into ourselves his nature and perfections. And should you erect to him a temple more magnificent than Solomon's, and load his altars with hecatombs of sacrifices, and make it perpetually ring with psalms and resounding choirs of hallelujahs, it would not be comparably so great an honour to him, as to convert your own souls into living temples, and make them the habitations of his glory and perfection. For he values no sacrifices like that of an obedient will, delights in no choir like that of pure and heavenly affections, nor hath he in all his creation an ensign of honour so truly worthy of him as that of a divine and godlike soul; a soul that reflects his image, and shines back his own glory upon him. Wherefore, since it is by the practice of moral goodness that we receive God, and copy his nature into

our own, it is no wonder he should make it the principal part of our duty. For how can it be otherwise expected, but that he should exact that chiefly of us which most conduces to his own glory? Since then nothing we can do can conduce to his glory, but only our receiving benefits from him; and since no benefit we receive from him can so much conduce to it as our receiving himself; and since we can no otherwise receive himself, but by practising that goodness which is the perfection of his nature; we must hereby doubtless render him the greatest honour and glory.

II. God hath made moral goodness the principal part of our duty, because it is by this that we truly imitate him. For so you find in scripture, that everywhere God is proposed to us for a pattern of action, it is by some act or other of morality that we are required to transcribe and imitate him. So 1 Pet. i. 16. *Be ye holy, for I am holy;* and Luke vi. 36. *Be ye merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful;* and Matt. v. 48. *Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.* And indeed it is only in moral goodness that God can be the pattern of our imitation: as for those perfections of his which for distinction sake we call natural, viz. his omniscience and omnipresence, omnipotence and eternity, they are all beyond the sphere of our imitation, and therefore were never proposed to us as the copies of our actions. But as for his moral perfections, viz. his goodness and righteousness, and purity and mercy, they are the fundamental rules and standards of all moral action. For the nature of God, as it is infinitely good and righteous, is the eternal fountain whence all the laws of morality are

derived; and all those moral precepts by which he governs his rational creation are only so many exemplifications of the moral perfections of his own nature. For the holiness of God, which comprehends all his natural perfections, consists in that essential rectitude of nature, whereby he always chooses and acts conformably to the dictates of his own infallible reason; and it is to this rectitude of choosing and acting that all his moral laws do oblige us. For moral laws are only the dictates of right reason, prescribing us what to do and what to avoid; so that in our compliance with them we follow the rule of God's own will and actions, and thereby imitate the eternal rectitude of his nature. For though in those different states and relations of God and creature, right reason cannot be supposed to oblige him and us to all the same particular choices and actions, yet it obliges us both to act reasonably in our respective states and relations: it obliges God to act reasonably, and as it becomes the state and relation of a God and creatures; and it obliges us to act reasonably, and as it becomes the state and relation of men and creatures. And as for God, he is invariably inclined to do all that right reason obliges him to by the essential rectitude of his own nature; and herein consists all his moral perfection, which is nothing else but the immutable inclination of his nature, to do whatever is just and good and reasonable. So that while we live according to the dictates of reason, or, which is the same thing, the eternal laws of morality, we trace and imitate the moral perfections of God; and in our place and station live at the same rate, and by the same rule, that he doth in his. We do what God himself would do, if he were in

our place, and what the Son of God did do when he was in our nature; and there is no other difference between his life and ours, but what necessarily arises out of our different states and relations. Since therefore moral goodness is an imitation of God, it is no wonder that he so much prefers it before all other matter of duty. For he must needs be supposed to love that above all things which is the true copy and image of those perfections of his nature, for the sake of which he loves himself above all. For he loves himself, not merely because he is himself, but because he is in all respects morally good, and his will and power are perfectly compliant with the infallible dictates of his own reason; and hence arises his infinite complacency in himself, that there is nothing in him but what his own reason perfectly approves, no inclination in his will or nature but what is exactly agreeable to the fairest ideas of his own mind. And since it is for his own goodness-sake that he loves himself as he doth, we may be sure that there is nothing without him can be so dear to him, as that in us which is the image of his goodness. Every like, we say, loves its like; and *the righteous Lord*, saith the Psalmist, *loveth righteousness*, Psalm xi. 7. i. e. being righteous himself, he loves righteousness in others by an invincible sympathy of nature. His greatest heaven and delight is in his own most righteous nature, and next to that, in righteous souls that imitate and resemble him. Ψυχῆς καθαρᾶς τόπον οἰκειότερον ἐπὶ γῆς Θεὸς οὐκ ἔχει, "God hath not a more grateful habitation "upon earth than in a pure and virtuous mind;" εὐσέβεσιν δὲ βροτοῖς γάνυμαι, τόσον ὅσον ὀλύμπῳ, saith Apollo, that mimic of God, by his Pythian oracle;

i. e. " I rejoice as much in pious souls as in my own " heaven." Which is muchwhat the same with that gracious declaration that God himself makes by the prophet Isaiah, lvii. 15. *Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* Since therefore moral duties are all but so many copies and exemplifications of God's nature, this is sufficient reason why he should prefer them before all the positives of religion.

III. God principally requires moral goodness, because it is by the practice of this that we advance to our own natural happiness. For the natural happiness of reasonable creatures consists in being entirely governed by right reason, i. e. in having our minds perfectly informed what it is that right reason requires of us, and our wills and affections reduced to an entire conformity thereunto. And this is the perfection of moral goodness, which consists in behaving ourselves towards God and ourselves and all the world, as right reason advises, or as it becomes rational creatures placed in our circumstances and relations. And when, by practising all that true piety and virtue which moral goodness implies, we are perfectly accomplished in our behaviour towards God, ourselves, and all the world, so as to render to each, without any reserve or reluctancy, what is fit and due in the judgment of right reason, we are arrived to the most happy state that a reasonable nature can aspire to. It is true, in this life we cannot be perfectly happy; and that not only because we live in wretched bodies

that are continually liable to pain and sickness, but also because we are imperfect ourselves, and have none to converse with but imperfect creatures. But were we once stripped of these natural and moral imperfections, wheresoever we lived we should necessarily be happy. Were I to live all alone, without this painful body, I should necessarily be in a great measure happy while I followed right reason, though I lived in the darkest nook of the creation. For there I should still contemplate God, and while I did so, my mind would be always ravished with his beauty and perfections; there I should most ardently love him, and while I did so, I should sympathise and share with him in his happiness; there I should still adore and praise him, and while I did so, I should feel myself continually drawn up to him, and wrapt into a real enjoyment of him; there I should be imitating his perfections, and while I did so, I should enjoy an unspeakable self-satisfaction, perceiving how every moment I grew a more divine and godlike creature; there I should entirely resign up myself to his heavenly will and disposal, and while I did so, I should be perpetually exulting under a joyous assurance of his love and favour: in a word, there I should firmly depend upon his truth and goodness, and while I did so, I should be always triumphing in a sure and certain hope of a happy being for ever. Thus, were I shut up all alone in an unbodied state, and had none but God to converse with, by behaving myself towards him as right reason directs me, I should always enjoy him, and in that enjoyment should be always happy. And if, while I thus behaved myself towards God, I took care at the same time to demean myself to-

wards myself with that exact prudence and temperance, and fortitude and humility, which right reason requires, I should hereby create another heaven within me; a heaven of calm thoughts, quiet and uniform desires, serene and placid affections, which would be so many overflowing springs of pleasure, tranquillity, and contentment within me. But if, while I thus enjoyed God and myself, by behaving myself as right reason directs, I might be admitted to live and converse among perfect spirits, and to demean myself towards them with that exact charity and justice, and peaceableness and modesty, which right reason requires, the wit of man could not conceive a true pleasure beyond what I should now enjoy. For now I should be possessed of every thing my utmost wishes could propose; of a good God, a godlike, joyful, and contented soul, a peaceable, kind, and righteous neighbourhood; and so all above, within, and without me, would be a pure and perfect heaven. And indeed, when I have thrown off this body, and am stripped into a naked ghost, the only, or at least the greatest goods my nature will be capable of enjoying, are God, myself, and blessed spirits; and these are no otherwise enjoyable, but only by acts of piety and virtue, without which there is no good thing beyond the grave that a soul can taste or relish. So that if, when I go to seek my fortune in the world of spirits, God should thus bespeak me; "O man, now thou art leaving all these enjoyments "of sense, consult with thyself what will do thee good, "and thou shalt have whatsoever thou wilt ask to "carry with thee into that spiritual state;" I am sure the utmost I should crave would be this; "Lord, give me a heart inflamed with love and

" winged with duty to thee, that thereby I may but " enjoy thee; give me a sober and a temperate mind, " that thereby I may but enjoy myself; give me a " kind, a peaceable, a righteous temper, that thereby " I may but enjoy the sweet society of blessed spirits; " O give me but these blessed things, and thou hast " crowned all my wishes, and to eternity I will never " crave any other favour for myself but only this, " that I may continue a pious and virtuous soul for " ever; for while I continue so, I am sure I shall " enjoy all spiritual good, and be as happy as heaven " can make me." So that the main happiness, you see, of human nature consists in the perfection of moral goodness; and it being so, it is no wonder that the good God, who above all things desires the happiness of his creatures, should above all things exact of us the duties of morality. He knows that our supreme beatitude is founded in our piety and virtue, and that out of our free and constant, sprightly and vivacious exercise of these, arises all our heaven both here and hereafter; and knowing this, that tender love which he bears us, that mighty concern which he hath for our welfare, makes him thus urgent and importunate with us. For he regards our duty no farther than it tends to our good, and values each act of our obedience by what it contributes to our happiness; and it is therefore that he prefers moral duties above positive, because they are more essential to our eternal welfare.

IV. And lastly, God principally requires of us moral goodness, because when all positive duty is ceased, this is to be the eternal work and exercise of our natures. For moral good is *from everlasting to everlasting*, its birth was elder than the world,

and its life and duration runs parallel with eternity; before ever *the mountains were brought forth* it was founded in the nature of God, and as an inseparate beam of his all-comprehending reason it shines from one end of the world to the other. For as soon as ever there was a rational creature in being, the obligation of morality laid hold on him, before ever any positive duty was imposed; and as long as ever there remains a rational creature the obligations of morality will abide on him, when all positive duty is expired. For moral obligations are not founded, like positive ones, upon mutable circumstances, but upon firm and everlasting reasons; upon reasons that to all eternity will carry with them the same force and necessity. For as long as we are the creatures of an infinite perfect Creator, it will be as much our duty as it is now to love and adore him; as long as we are reasonable creatures, it will be as much our duty as it is now to submit our will and affections to our reason; and as long as we are related to other reasonable creatures, it will be as much our duty as it is now to be kind, and just, and peaceable, in all our intercourses with them. So that these are but duties as no will can dispense with, no reason abrogate, no circumstances disannul or make void; but as long as God is what he is, and we are what we are, they must and will oblige us. So that what the Psalmist saith of God may be truly applied to moral goodness; *The heavens shall perish, but thou shalt remain; they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and be folded up and changed; but thou art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and thy years shall have no end.* But as, long since, the positive parts of the Jewish religion were

cancelled and repealed, the vail of the temple rent in twain, the temple itself buried in ruins, and all its altars thrown down, and their sacrifices abolished, whilst the moral parts of that religion still stand firm as the everlasting mountains about Jerusalem; so the time will come when the positive parts of Christianity itself must cease, when faith must be swallowed up in vision, and sacraments be made void by perfection, and all the stated times and outward solemnities of our worship expire into an everlasting sabbath; but then, when all this scene of things is quite vanished away, piety and virtue will still keep the stage, and be the everlasting exercise of our glorified natures. For as I shewed before, all positive duty is instituted in subserviency to moral, and, like a scaffold to a house, is only erected for the convenience of building up this everlasting structure of morality; and when this is once finished, must be all taken down again as an unnecessary encumbrance, that now only hides and obscures the beauty of that heavenly building that was raised on it, and shall abide without it for ever, to entertain our faculties through all the future ages of our being, and to be the everlasting mansion of our natures. Wherefore, since positive duties must all cease and expire, and only moral goodness is to be our business for ever, it is no wonder that God, who is so good a Master, takes so much care, in this short apprenticeship of our life, to train us up in that which is to be our trade for ever. He knows it is upon piety and virtue that we must live to eternity, and maintain ourselves in all our glory and happiness; and that if, when we come into the invisible world, we have not this blessed trade to subsist by, we are undone for ever;

and therefore, out of a tender regard to our welfare, he makes it his principal care to train us up in this everlasting business of our natures.

What then remains, but that above all things we take care to apply ourselves to the practice of moral goodness; to contemplate, and love, and adore, and imitate God; to depend upon him, and resign up ourselves to his disposal and government; to be sober and temperate in our affections and appetites, and just, and charitable, and modest, and peaceable towards one another. These are the great things which God requires at our hands; and without these all our religion is a fulsome cheat. It is true, the positive parts of religion are our duty as well as these, and God by his sovereign authority exacts them at our hands; and unless, when Jesus Christ hath been sufficiently proposed to us, we do sincerely believe in him; unless we strike covenant with him by baptism, and frequently renew that covenant in the Lord's supper; unless we diligently attend on the public assemblies of his worship, and use an honest care to avoid schism, and to persist in unity with his true catholic church, there is no pretence of morality will bear us out when we appear before his dread tribunal. But then we are to consider that the proper use of all these positive duties is to improve and perfect us in moral goodness; and unless we use them to this effect, we shall render them altogether void and insignificant. Wherefore, as we would not lose all the fruits of our positive duties, let us take care to extend them to their utmost design, to improve our sacrifice to obedience, our sacraments to gratitude and love, our hearing to practice, our praying to devotion, and our fasting to humility

and repentance. For if we rest in these duties, and go no farther, thinking by such short payments to compound with God for all those debts we owe to the eternal laws of morality, we miserably cheat and befool our own souls, which, notwithstanding all this exactness about the positives of religion, are by their own immortal affection still enslaved to the Devil; to whom it is much one what our outward form of religion is, whether it be Christian, or heathen, or Mahometan, provided it doth not operate on our minds, or give any check to the current of our depraved natures. For whether we bow to God or to an idol is all one to the Devil, so long as our souls remain profane and indevout; whether we communicate in the holy sacrament of Christ's death or in the impure rites of Venus and Priapus, is indifferent to him, so long as our hearts continue putrid and corrupt, steaming with unchaste desires and affections; whether we celebrate the Christian festivals, or the bloody saturnals, or barbarous bacchanalia, is no great matter to him, provided our minds be but cankered with wrath and malice, and cruelty and revenge. These are the sinews of his government, and the bands of our allegiance to his throne; and whilst they are preserved, he knows his kingdom is safe, and so long he doth not much regard what our outward religion is. Nay, there is nothing can be a higher gratification to his ambition, than to behold himself served in Christ's own livery, and worshipped in a form of godliness; by which he hath the pleasure of dividing empires with God, and ravishing the better share from him, of beholding his hated Creator mocked with the shell and outside of a worshipper, whilst himself is treated with the kernel and

inside. For whilst we continue wicked under an outward form of religion, we do in effect sacrifice our beast to God, and ourselves to the Devil; who above all things loves those unnatural commixtures of hearer and slanderer, worshipper and deceiver, communicant and drunkard, sacrificer and oppressor; by which we only exalt and sublimate impiety, which never looks so glorious as when it is gilded with fasts and long prayers. Wherefore, as you will answer it at your eternal peril, do not cheat and abuse yourselves with the name and shadow of religion; lest, when you have superstructed your hopes of happiness on a rotten foundation, it should finally miscarry, and sink underneath you into everlasting wretchedness and despair.

CHAP II.

Concerning religion; what it is, and what things are necessary for the founding and securing its obligations.

HAVING in the foregoing chapter briefly discoursed concerning the nature of moral goodness, and shewn that it is the principal part of religion, it will be requisite, in the next place, to explain what religion is; that so from thence we may collect what things are necessary to the founding and securing its obligations: which will be the subject of the ensuing chapters.

Religion in the general respects God as the object and centre of all its acts and offices. For upon supposition that there is such a being as God, and that there are such beings as reasonable creatures, or ca-

pable subjects of religion, it will necessarily follow that there must be some religion or other to tie and oblige these creatures to that God. For by God we mean a Being that hath all possible perfection in him, and is the supreme cause and fountain of all other being and perfection; and such a Being we must needs acknowledge doth not only deserve the worthiest acts of religion that reasonable creatures, who alone are capable of understanding his wrath[a], can render to him, but hath also an unalienable right to exact and require them; and that not only upon the account of his own essential desert, (for whatever he deserves he hath a right to demand,) but also upon account of the right he hath to reasonable creatures, who owe their beings to him and all their capacities of serving him, and so cannot dispose of themselves without manifest injury to him contrary to his will and orders. By reasonable creatures we mean beings that are derived from God, and are endowed by him with a capacity of understanding him and themselves; and such creatures must necessarily stand obliged to render him such acts as are suitable to, and due acknowledgments of the perfections of his nature and their own dependence upon him; and this obligation is that which we call religion. Which word, according to Lactantius, lib. 4. Divin. Institut. cap. 28. is derived *à religando*, from *binding* or *obliging* us to God. So that *true religion in the general is the obligation of reasonable creatures to render such acts of worship to God as are suitable to the excellency of his nature and their dependence upon him.* Which definition includes both the doctrines and duties of religion. For the doctrines are the reasons by which it obliges us to the

[a] wrath.] So the editions. Perhaps it should be *worth*.

duties: and as there is no duty in religion but what derives its tie and obligation from some doctrine contained in it, so there is no doctrine in religion but what ties and obliges us to some duty that is enjoined in it. When therefore I call religion an obligation, I conclude in that term all those doctrines of it concerning God, his nature, and his transactions with his creatures, which are the reasons by which we stand obliged to render all acts of worship to him. But for the better understanding the nature of true religion, it is necessary we should distinguish it into natural and revealed. By natural religion, I mean *the obligation which natural reason lays upon us to render to God all that worship and obedience, which, upon the consideration of his nature and our dependence upon him, it discovers to be due to him.* For God having planted in us a rational faculty, by the due exercise of which we are naturally led into the belief of his being, the sense of his perfections, and the acknowledgment of his providence, he expects we should follow it as the guide and directory of our lives and actions; and whatsoever this faculty doth naturally and in its due exercise dictate to us, is as much the voice of God as any revelation. For whatever it naturally dictates, it must dictate by his direction who is the Author of its nature, and who having framed it to speak such a sense, and pronounce such a judgment of things, hath thereby put his word into its mouth, and doth himself speak through it as through a standing oracle which he hath erected in our breasts, on purpose to convey and deliver his own mind and will to us. So that whatsoever natural reason, rightly exercised, teaches us concerning God and our duty towards

him, that is true religion, and doth as effectually bind and oblige us to him, as if it had been immediately revealed by him. It teaches us that God is infinitely wise, and just, and powerful, and good; that he is the fountain of our beings, the disposer of our affairs, and the arbitrator of our fate, both here and hereafter; and by these doctrines it obliges us to admire and adore him, to fear and love him, to trust and obey him. And this is natural religion; which consists of such doctrines as natural reason teaches us concerning God, and his nature and providence, and of such duties as it infers from those doctrines, and enforces by them; and all the doctrines of this religion, upon which it founds its duties, being eternal verities, as they must necessarily be, being all deduced from the immutable nature of God and things, all the duties of it must be morally, that is eternally good and reasonable, because those doctrines are the eternal reasons upon which they are founded, and by which they oblige. So that whatsoever is a duty of natural religion must oblige for ever, because it obliges by an eternal reason, and so can never be dispensed with, or abrogated, till the natures of things are cancelled and reversed, and eternal truths are converted into lies.

In short therefore, natural religion hath only natural reason for its rule and measure, which from the nature of God and things deduces all those eternal reasons by which it distinguishes our actions into honest and dishonest, decorous and filthy, good and evil, necessary and sinful. For it doth not make them good or evil by judging them so; but if it judgeth truly, it judgeth of them as it finds them; and unless it finds them good or evil in themselves

upon some eternal reason, for or against them, its judgment is false and erroneous. So that the objective goodness or evil that is in the actions themselves is the measure of our natural reason, but our natural reason judging truly concerning them is the measure of our choice or refusal of them; for be our action never so good or evil in itself, unless we have some eternal reason for or against it, we cannot judge it so; and unless we judge it so, we cannot reasonably choose or refuse it; but as soon as ever we have judged and pronounced it good or evil upon an eternal reason, we stand obliged by that judgment to do or forbear it. So that right reason, pronouncing such actions good, and such evil, is the law of nature; and those eternal reasons upon which it so pronounces them are the creed of nature; both which together make natural religion. And by this religion was the world governed, at least the greatest part of it, for some thousands of years; till by long and sad experience it was found too weak to correct the errors of men's minds, and restrain the wild extravagancies of their wills and affections; and then God, out of his great pity to lost and degenerate mankind, vouchsafed to us the glorious light of revealed religion, which, in the largest acceptation of it, includes all natural religion, as well the *credenda* as *agenda*, the doctrines as the duties of it; both which are contained in that revelation of his will, which God hath made to the world, to which it hath superadded sundry doctrines and duties of supernatural religion.

But strictly speaking, revealed religion, as it is distinguished from natural, consists of such doctrines and duties as are knowable and discoverable only by

revelation; as are not to be deduced and inferred by reasoning and discourse from any necessary or natural principles, but wholly depend upon the counsel and good-will of God. And where things depend entirely upon God's will, and their being or not being lies wholly in his free disposal, it is impossible that our natural reason should ever arrive at the knowledge of them without some revelation of his will concerning them. For in such matters as these, where the will of God is absolutely free, reason without revelation hath neither necessary nor probable causes and principles to argue from, and therefore can make neither certain conclusions nor so much as probable guesses concerning them, but must necessarily remain altogether in the dark, till such time as God hath revealed to it which way his will is determined; and of such matters as these consists all revealed religion strictly so called. For though God hath made sundry revelations of his will, yet the subject-matter of them was for the main always the same, viz. the doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ, and the duties that are subsequent thereunto, which from that promise which God made to Adam upon his fall, *The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head*, to the last promulgation of the gospel, hath been the great theme of all divine revelation. For what else was that revelation which God made to Abraham, *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, but only the dawning of the gospel? which is nothing but glad tidings of the Mediator. What was the law of Moses, but only the same gospel shining through a cloud of types and symbolical representations? and what are all the succeeding prophecies of the Old Testament, but

only the same gospel still shining clearer and clearer, till at last it broke forth in its meridian brightness? And were this a proper place, I think I could easily demonstrate, that from Adam to Moses, from Moses to the prophets, from the prophets to Jesus Christ, the main scope and design of all divine revelation hath been the gradual discovery of this great mystery of the mediation. So that revealed religion was for the matter of it always the same, though it was not always revealed with the same perspicuity, but cleared up, by degrees, from an obscure twilight to a perfect day. Wherefore Christianity, which in strictness is nothing but the doctrine of the mediation, together with its appendant duties, ought not to be looked on as a new religion of 1700 years' date; for in reality it is as ancient as the fall, and was then preached to Adam in that dark and mysterious promise; after which it was a little more clearly repeated, though very obscurely still, in God's covenant with Abraham; and again, after that, it was much more amply revealed in the types and figures of the law of Moses, which yet, like painted glass in a window, did under their pompous show still darken and obscure the holy mysteries within them, which were nothing but the doctrines and laws of the Christian religion. So that Judaism was only Christianity veiled, and Christianity is only Judaism revealed.

Thus the religion of the Mediator, you see, was the principal subject of all divine revelation; and this, without revelation, natural reason could never have discovered, because the whole of it depended upon the free-will of God. For whether he would admit of any mediator or no; whether he would

admit his own Son to be our mediator or no; whether he would deposit such inestimable blessings for us or no, in the hands of our mediator, was entirely left to his free determination; and there was no necessary cause either within or without him, no, nor any probable one neither, that human reason could ever have discovered, that could incline or determine him one way or the other. So that till such time that he revealed his will to us, we were left utterly in the dark as to this matter, and had no manner of principles to argue from, or so much as to guess by. This therefore is strictly the revealed religion, as it stands in opposition to the natural. But since together with revealed religion God hath put forth a second edition of natural, which was almost lost and grown out of print, through the wretched negligence and stupidity of mankind, and since he hath not only revealed them together, but also incorporated them into one; religion, as it is now framed and constituted by this happy conjunction of natural with revealed, may be thus defined; *It is the obligation of rational creatures, to render such acts of worship to God through Jesus Christ as he himself hath instituted, and as are in their own natures suitable to his excellencies and their dependence upon him.* Where by *acts of worship* I do not mean such only as are immediately directed to and terminated upon God, as all those are which are contained in the first table of the Decalogue; but all those acts in general which God hath commanded, which being performed upon a religious account, that is, out of homage and obedience to God's will and authority, are as truly and properly acts of worship to him, as prayer, or praise, or adjuration.

And now having given this short account of the nature of religion, it will from hence be easy to collect what principles are necessary to the founding and securing its obligations: for,

First, God being the great object of all religion, it must be absolutely necessary, in order to our being truly religious, that we believe that God is.

Secondly, Religion being an obligation of us to God; that this obligation may take effect upon us, it is necessary we should believe that he concerns himself about us, and consequently that he governs the world by his providence.

Thirdly, Religion obliging us to render all due acts of worship to him, to enforce this obligation upon us, it is necessary we should believe, that he will certainly reward us if we render those acts to him, and as certainly punish us if we do not.

Fourthly, These acts of worship, which religion obliges us to, being such as are suitable to the excellency of God's nature, to enable us to fulfil this obligation, it is necessary we should have right apprehensions of the nature of God.

Fifthly, Religion obliging us to render all these acts of worship to God in and through Jesus Christ, to our performing this, it is necessary we should believe in his mediation.

These are the great principles in which all the obligations of religion are founded; and therefore, in order to the thorough fixing those obligations upon men's minds, it will be necessary, before we proceed to the particular duties which religion obliges us to, to discourse of these principles distinctly.

CHAP. III.

Of the necessity of believing that God is, in order to men's being truly religious.

HE that cometh unto God, saith the apostle, *must believe that God is*, Heb. xi. 6. where by *coming to God* is meant worshipping him, that is, expressing our veneration of and affection to him, by outward and visible signs and actions; and unless our outward actions in religion proceed from an inward veneration of and affection to him, they are not worship, but mockery. But how is it possible a man should inwardly venerate God, when he believes there is no such Being in the world? For how real soever any thing may be in itself, if we believe it is not, it is to us as if it were not: and therefore, though God doth so necessarily exist, as that he cannot but be, the very notion of him implying an infinite distance from not being; yet, while we believe he is not, our thoughts can be no more concerned about him than about purchasing an inheritance in Utopia. So that this proposition that God is, is the prime fundamental of all religion; and if this be removed, religion must sink, and all its sacred obligations fly in sunder. But this is so self-evident, that it would be very impertinent to insist upon the proof of it. All that I shall do therefore, in pursuance of this argument, shall be to endeavour to establish the belief of this fundamental truth upon which all religion depends; and that, first, by inquiring into and removing the causes of men's infidelity in this matter; secondly, by representing the folly and unreasonableness of it. For as for the proofs and evidences of God's being, I shall reserve them till I come to discourse of his pro-

vidence, where, I think, there is enough said to satisfy any man that is not desperately hardened against all conviction.

SECT. I.

Of the causes of atheism; shewing the great absurdity and unreasonableness of them.

CONSIDERING how loudly the voice of nature, the consent of nations, and the beautiful structure and contrivance of things do proclaim the being of God, one would think it impossible there should be any such monster as an atheist among reasonable beings; and indeed it hath been warmly disputed among the learned, whether there be any such or no; a question which these later ages have determined in the affirmative, by an induction of too many woful instances. But doubtless, had men impartially attended to the dictates of reason, and not delivered themselves up to the infatuation of their lusts, and the inveterate prejudice of a corrupt imagination, it would have been impossible for so many gross absurdities as atheism implies to have entered into their minds; but when once men's wills and affections have espoused a proposition, they will make one shift or other, be it never so absurd, to impose it on their understandings; and considering how many causes there are leading men to atheism who are predisposed thereunto, I cannot think an atheist to be so great a wonder. For so long as men's understandings are led by their wills, and their wills are biassed with inclinations to impiety, they can hardly forbear wishing there were no God; and then from wishing there were none, to believing

there is none, will be a very short and easy transition. Since therefore their atheism proceeds not so much from the defect of their reason as from the fault of their wills, perhaps the most effectual way to cure it is, rather to detect and remove those faulty causes in their wills, than to attempt upon their reason with the proofs and demonstrations of a Deity. And accordingly you see that when God had once erected this goodly theatre of beings, and imprinted on it so many glorious characters of his own power and wisdom and goodness, though from time to time he hath wrought innumerable miracles to reduce men from superstition, idolatry, and wickedness, yet he never wrought one to reduce them from atheism. And indeed to what purpose should he? it being highly improbable that they who will not be convinced of the being of God by this standing miracle the world, in which there are so many ample demonstrations of his being, should be convinced of it by any other miracles; for other miracles are only the disorders and interruptions of nature; and certainly the regular course and standing order of nature is a much more glorious evidence of God's wisdom and power, than the most miraculous interruptions and disorders of it. And therefore if men will be atheists, notwithstanding God hath imprinted so many proofs of his being on this visible creation, it is plain it is not their reason but their wills that make them so: and if so, to what purpose is it to urge their reason with the arguments of God's being? since, if they will not listen to those that are round about them, and are every where to be found in the great volume of nature, it is highly improbable that even miracles themselves,

which are God's peculiar arguments, (and are therefore called the demonstrations of his Spirit,) should ever be able to persuade them. Wherefore, to put a stop to this pestilential disease, which in these later ages hath been so fatally propagated among all degrees and orders of men, I conceive the most proper way is, to discover and remove those faults in their wills which have such a malevolent influence on their understandings: and the principal ones may be reduced to these nine heads:

I. A perverse opposition of will to the will and nature of God.

II. Superstitious misapprehensions concerning God.

III. Precipitant rashness in prescribing to and prejudging the divine providence.

IV. Vain affections of singularity in opinion.

V. Custom of drolling on and ridiculing the most serious things.

VI. Taking up our religion, or opinions in religion, without examination.

VII. Measuring the truth or falsehood of religion, by the practice of such as make high pretences to it.

VIII. Placing religion in the little opinions that constitute the sects and parties we are engaged in.

IX. Profane and careless neglect of public worship.

I. One great cause of atheism is the perverse opposition of men's wills to the will and nature of God. For the natural notion which men have of God is, that he is a most pure and holy Being, infinitely removed by the perfection of his nature from all inclinations that are contrary to the dictates of right reason. And accordingly in all those declara-

tions which he hath made of his will, they find him expressing an high detestation of all immorality and wickedness, and commanding them to abstain from it under the most dreadful penalties, which they know he hath both right and power to inflict when he pleases. Notwithstanding which, presuming on his goodness, and a future repentance, they suffer themselves to be tempted and seduced into wickedness; the pleasure of which tolls them on from one wickedness to another, till their wills are captivated by custom to inveterate habits of sinning. So that now their sense of God, and of his almighty displeasure, being no longer able to master the stubbornness of their wills, only serves to fret and disturb them, to raise terrors and anxieties in their consciences, and therewithal to imbitter the pleasure of their sin. For so long as this sense remains alive in their bosoms, they can never hope to sin quietly for it; and it being so, they have no other remedy but either to part with that or their sins. For while they retain their sins, the belief of a God will grow an intolerable vexation to them, unless by sophisticating their belief with false notions of religion, they can temper it into an amicable compliance with their lusts. And this is usually the artifice of the duller sort of people, whose understandings are more easily imposed on, viz. to intermingle with their belief of a God such notions of religion as may render it favourable and propitious to their lusts. And hence, I doubt not, sprang most of those wicked doctrines which from time to time have been foisted into Christianity, from the desire which men have to accommodate the difference between their consciences and their wicked wills, and reconcile their

natural sense of God to their sins. But, alas! these artifices are all so thin and transparent, that it is a hard matter for men of wit to impose them on their understandings; and though they have an equal good-will to these wicked doctrines with the duller sort of sinners, yet their reason is too sharp-sighted to be choused and deceived by them: and therefore usually they go another way to work, and being sensible that they can never enjoy their sins in quiet, while they are awed with the sense and belief of a Deity, and yet obstinately resolved that they will enjoy them, they have no other expedient but to muster up all their wit and reason to dispute the belief of a God out of their minds; and being stiffly resolved to persist in their wickedness, they are obliged by their own interest to wish there were no God to observe and punish them. And then, *facile credunt quod volunt*, they easily believe what they would have, and the slenderest probability will sway their understanding to vote on the side of their interest and affections. So that when men are resolved to be wicked, atheism is their interest and refuge, to which they are many times forced to fly in their own defence, to avoid the clamours and persecutions of their consciences. Had these men lived in those good pagan days wherein they might have rioted with devotion, sacrificed to the gods in drunken bowls, and worshipped in the arms of a strumpet, no men would have been more religious than they; and could they now but compound the matter so, as that God should let them alone to enjoy their lusts, there is no doubt but they would be well enough content to let him alone to enjoy his being. But because their sense of him frets and galls them, they

first grow impatient under it, and then set their wits to work to raise objections against it, and either to hugh or dispute it out of their minds. And accordingly Plato makes mention of a sort of atheists, οἷς ἂν πρὸς τῇ δόξῃ τῇ θεῶν ἔρημα εἶναι πάντα, ἀκράτειαί τε ἡδονῶν καὶ λυπῶν προσπέσωσι, μνῆμαί τε ἰσχυραὶ καὶ μαθήσεις ὀξεῖαι παρῶσι, "who, in consequence of their opi-" nion that all things are void of gods, have plunged " themselves into intemperance of pleasures and " pains, being otherwise persons of great memories " and quick understandings." *De Leg.* lib. x. But, alas! how unreasonable is it, in a matter of such vast importance, for men to believe by their interest and affections! It is true, could men put out the sun with winking, or extinguish the nature of things by an obstinate disbelief of them, it would be very justifiable for those men to believe there is no God, whose interest it is that there should be none. But, alas! the natures of things are unalterable, and will be what they are, whatsoever our opinion is about them. If there be a God, there will be one, whether we think fit to believe it or no; and though, when the interest of our lusts requires it, we may possibly dispute ourselves out of the belief of his being, yet he is not to be disputed out of his being. We may indeed secure ourselves from the dread of his vengeance, by disputing ourselves into a disbelief of him, but we can never secure ourselves by it from the danger of his vengeance. And what a senseless thing is it for a man to shut his eyes against an unavoidable danger, merely for fear of being frightened by it; and when he might shun God's vengeance by dreading it, instead thereof to shun the dread of it! What is this, but to set his reason at work to rock

his conscience asleep, that so he may destroy himself without fear or disturbance?

II. Another great cause of atheism is superstitious misapprehensions concerning God; which (though they are lodged in the mind, yet) are most commonly exhaled from the affections, that like impure fogs do generally breathe up all those meteors that darken and disturb the region above. And indeed most of our ill apprehensions of God are transcribed and copied from our own affections; which, be they never so irregular, our own self-love will be apt to celebrate for perfections. And then, whatsoever we esteem a perfection in ourselves, we naturally attribute to God, who is the source and standard of all perfection; and those affections of our own nature, which we most injuriously attribute to God, we love or hate in him according as we love or hate them in other men. Thus the fond and indulgent, who are apt to dote upon others without reason, and to hug even their vices and deformities, are prone to attribute their own temper to God, and to look upon him as a Being that is infinitely indulgent to those whom without any reason he hath chosen for his favourites. And because he who is fond of others loves others should be fond of him, to be sure he will love his fond god too, and be far more devoutly affected towards the idol of his own temper, than to the true God himself clothed in all the native glory of his own attributes. But, on the contrary, those who are stern, and peevish, and implacable, can by no means endure their own temper in others; and therefore it is no wonder if they hate it in God, to whom they are wont injuriously to attribute it. For how is it possible for them to affect a divinity,

whom they have pictured in their own minds with such a stern and terrible aspect, with an imperious self-will that bears down all things before it by irresistible might, without any respect to right or wrong, with bloody hands and a vengeful heart, and a testy, peevish, and unaccountable nature, that loves and hates without any reason, and is pleased or displeased as the toy takes it. And having thus set up such a grim idol of God in their minds as they can by no means affect, they secretly wish there were no such Being, which is the brink of atheism. Thus their ghastly apprehensions of God meeting with the surly and churlish temper within them, instead of moulding them into devotion to him, commonly enrage and canker them with malice against him, and accordingly Plutarch well observes, Οὐκ οἴεται θεοὺς εἶναι ὁ ἄθεος, ὁ δὲ δεισιδαίμων οὐ βούλεται, i. e. The atheist thinks there is no God, and he who hath dreadful apprehensions of him wishes there were none; and he who wishes there were none, is but one remove from believing there is none. Thus you see in what a direct line vice leads to superstition, and superstition to atheism. For pride and wrath, malice and revenge, are naturally apt to engender in men's minds horrid and frightful apprehensions of God; which working on those sour and rugged passions that begot them, are as apt to exasperate and enrage them against him; and then their reason immediately takes part with their passion, and to gratify its wish that there were no God, sets itself industriously to argue him out of his being. But, alas! what an unreasonable procedure is this, for men to pin their faults upon God, and dress him in their own deformities, and when they have thus disguised

him by putting upon him their own frightful tempers, as the old persecutors did the Christians by wrapping them in lions' skins, to set on their wit and reason to worry him out of his being; what is this, but to make a god as the heathens did their Mercuries, and then fling stones at him? to transform him into a monstrous idol, and then dislike him, and then dash him in pieces? But be not deceived; God will be what he is, a most perfect, glorious, and amiable Being, how inglorious soever he may appear to you through the false medium of your own diabolical temper, which, like crimson-coloured glass, will represent the fairest objects to you bloody and terrible; but for you to hate God for no other reason but because your own hateful passions do reflect to you such an inglorious idea of him, and then to deny him because you hate him, is equally impious and unreasonable.

III. Another great cause of atheism is rashness and precipitancy in prescribing to and prejudging the divine providence; and this also most commonly arises from some great irregularity in men's wills and affections. For generally the rash judgments which men make of the divine providence are grounded on those unequal distributions it makes of the good things of this world, in prospering the bad and afflicting the good, upon which we are too often ready to charge it with being an unequal arbitrator of men's fates. The occasion of which is our immoderate estimation of the goods and evils of this world. We so enhance the goods of it in our opinions, as to think them great enough to be the crown and reward of virtue; and have such horrible apprehensions of the evils of it, as to imagine them great

enough to be the plagues and punishments of the most obstinate and notorious offenders. Whereas by the whole course of his providence it appears that God hath a different esteem of them both; that he thinks the best things of this world to be bad enough to be thrown away upon the most despicable persons; and therefore to express his scorn of these admirable vanities, he many times scatters them with a careless hand, as not thinking it worth the while to be so exact in the distribution of them, as to put them in gold scales, and weigh them out to mankind by grains and scruples. And as for the worst things of this world, he thinks them not so bad but that they may be endured without any considerable damage to the sufferer; and therefore many times suffers them to befall his own favourites, as not thinking it of moment enough to interpose his providence to shield them against their impotent impressions. And upon this difference of judgment men too often ground an inveterate quarrel against God; and because they dote upon this world, and think the goods of it good enough to be the portion of good men, and the evils of it bad enough to be the punishment of bad, they are angry with God for not being of their opinion, and are ready to arraign his providence, and to conclude that this world is governed by a blind chance that drops her favours at random, as the full-plumed hawk mews her loose feathers, and never cares who stoops to take them up. And this Ovid ingeniously acknowledges himself:

Dum rapiunt mala fata bonos, ignoscite fasso,
Sollicitor nullos esse putare deos; i. e.

"While I behold ill fates attend good men, I am tempted "to think there are no gods."

Marmoreo Licinus tumulo jacet, at Cato parvo,
Pompeius nullo: quis putet esse deos?

"The wicked Licinus lies in a marble tomb, but Cato in a "small one, and Pompey in none: who would think there "are gods?"

So also there are others, who, beholding themselves in the flattering mirror of their own self-conceit, are so taken with the reflections of their own merit and excellency, as that they cannot see how it is possible but that if there be a God, he must love and reward them; and therefore, if instead of so doing, God either deprives them of those worldly goods which they dote on, or frustrates them of those carnal hopes for whose accomplishment they have earnestly supplicated, they presently begin to murmur against him, and thence proceed to arraign the justice of his providence, and thence to deny both that and his being. For thus it comes to pass, saith Simplicius, that such who have no grounded belief of a Deity, when they observe the miseries of good men and the prosperities of bad, are, without any regard to the common notions of God, ready to cry out with him in the tragedian, Τολμῶ κατειπεῖν μήποτ' οὐκ εἰσὶν θεοὶ, κακοὶ γὰρ εὐτυχοῦντες ἐπιπλήττουσί με, i. e. "I dare affirm "there are no gods, because the wicked prosper that "hurt me." Thus from their fond affection to these worldly goods men frequently take occasion to quarrel with God's providence, for not appropriating them to be the rewards of virtue; and being once engaged in a quarrel against his providence, their next attempt is to dispute him out of his being.

But what an unreasonable way of concluding is this: I value this to be best, and that to be worst, and therefore God ought to be of my opinion, and to

proceed accordingly in his providence over the world: and there is nothing can be better or worse, within the prospect of an infinite wisdom, than what I apprehend to be best and worst for mankind; and therefore, if he will do good to the good, it must be in the method that I shall prescribe him, that is to say, he must crown them with rosebuds, and clothe them in purple, and feed them with the fat of the land; and, if he punish the wicked, he must give me leave to give aim to his arrows, and to direct him how, and what, and when, and where to shoot: and so long I am contented to allow him a being in the world: but if he will presume to cross my opinion of things, and steer his actions by the unerring compass of his own infinite wisdom; if he will rather choose to do good to the good by chastening than by prospering them, and to avenge himself upon the wicked by fattening them with prosperity for slaughter, I shall look upon it as such an affront to my judgment as will admit of no meaner expiation than the stripping him out of his providence and being. And what can be more ridiculous than for men to deny the being of God, because his providence sometimes crosses their foolish opinions of things, and doth not govern itself by the crooked rules which they are pleased to prescribe it.

IV. Another great cause of atheism is vain affectation of singularity in opinion; a vice that hath been always incident to men of speculation, who valuing themselves upon the stock of their knowledge and deep insight into the nature of things, have always affected to start new notions and advance contrary hypotheses to the received opinions of mankind, that so they may be vogued for men of singular know-

ledge, and seem to have taller understandings than the rest of their brethren. And this, I doubt not, hath been one great cause of speculative atheism; for there is no principle in nature which hath been more universally received among men than the belief of a Deity, which doubtless is the main reason why men who affect singularity have been so prone to quarrel at it. It doth not comport with their design of being thought wiser than the rest of the world, to submit their understandings to common notions and universal doctrines; because, should they think as other men do, they might probably be thought no wiser. Perhaps, had the belief of a Deity been lately started, and only received by some singular sect of virtuosos, these men might have been as forward to entertain it as they are now to reject it; but, because it is an old-fashion doctrine, in which all ages and nations have concurred, they think it would be a discredit to their understanding to wear it, and therefore they set their wits at work to invent atheistical hypotheses to solve the phenomena of nature without a Deity. And he that doth but impartially consider the haughty genius of those philosophers that laid the foundations of speculative atheism, may easily perceive that the great motive of their infidelity was nothing but a proud affectation of thinking counter to mankind. And indeed, could I but embrace the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, I should be tempted to believe, by the likeness of their humours, that it was one and the same soul that passed through Democritus into Protagoras, through Protagoras into Epicurus, and through Epicurus into Mr. Hobbs: and, since they so exactly agreed in their pride and haughty ostentation of

knowledge, it is justly supposable that this was the main cause of their agreement in atheism; which, being a singular doctrine, and directly contradictory to the common notions of mankind, was upon that account more adapted to the humour of these arrogant philosophers. And accordingly Plato describes the atheists of his age to be a conceited and scornful sort of people, and declares the cause of their atheism to be ἀμάθεια μάλα χαλεπὴ δοκοῦσα εἶναι μεγίστη φρόνησις, "a certain pernicious sort of ignorance that put on "a semblance of the greatest wisdom:" and afterwards he calls atheism τὸν παρὰ πολλοῖς δοξαζόμενον εἶναι σοφώτατον πάντων λόγων, "that which in the eyes of "some conceited people seemed to be the wisest of "all doctrines." *De Leg.* lib. x. And because these atheistical philosophers, who were some of them great masters of wit and learning, had the good luck to be remarked and gazed on, like so many antics, for their singularity, they have always found disciples and followers among the people of little sense and a great deal of vanity, who, being ambitious of the reputation of wits and philosophers, but having neither brains nor industry enough to merit it, are fain to shelter their ignorance in atheism, and there to face it out with laughter and boldness; and because by laughing at God and religion they deride the common faith of mankind, they fancy themselves singularly witty, and expect that others should fancy them so too; whereas in reality these little people are but mere pretenders to speculative atheism. For before they can be more, they must comprehend the whole system of the atheistical philosophy, and be able to describe all those supposed laws of motion, by which matter, without the conduct of a superior wisdom

and power, did originally range itself into this beautiful world, and to shew at least the possibility of all the strange appearances in nature without supposing a God; which is such a task as their feeble understandings durst never attempt; for the utmost they can pretend to is a few terms of the atheistical philosophy, which they have learned by rote, and do cant and smatter with as much skill and understanding as parrots do the lessons that are taught them. And though the brisk young gentlemen will sometimes boldly affirm, and, if you dare take them up, will lay a wager on it too, that reason is nothing but a train of imaginations; that choice is nothing but the last stroke of outward objects on the fancy; and that there is nothing in nature but matter and motion; yet, should you be so rude as to ask them what they mean by these phrases, you would uncase their ignorance, and utterly undo them. So that such as these are only the hawkers and retailers of atheism, that noise and cry it about; but have neither wit nor industry enough to understand it, but do take it up with the same implicit faith as the papists do their religion. Thus, as the ambition of being accounted wiser than others causes men to affect singularity in their opinions, so the affectation of singularity in opinion doth very often transport men into atheism.

Now though I would by no means plead for men's enslaving their understanding to vulgar opinions, so as to put a stop to all advancements of knowledge, and hinder the world from ever growing wiser; yet doubtless for men to quarrel at opinions for no other reason but because they are vulgarly received, is not only a rude affront to the reason of mankind, but

also an effectual way to involve ourselves in an endless labyrinth of mistakes. For while I affect to be singular in my opinion, I deprive myself of the assistance of other men's understandings, and in my travel for knowledge choose rather to go alone by myself through untrodden by-ways, than to keep the road, and follow the tract of those that have gone before me. So that unless I am wiser than all the world, which is very unlikely, it is a thousand to one but I bewilder and lose myself; for how wise and sagacious soever I may be, it is certain that many heads are wiser than one; and therefore, when all heads concur in the same judgment, it is probable at least that that judgment is true: he therefore who rejects an opinion because all or most do embrace it, affects to think counter to the strongest evidence, and to believe against the greatest probability. It is true, in many things the generality of men have been mistaken, which is a sufficient reason why we should not pin our faith upon the sleeve of vulgar opinions, but impartially examine before we confidently embrace them; but yet there is a reverence due to the judgment of mankind, and the laws of modesty require us not to be confident against it without very great reason; but to affect to run counter to it, especially in such a matter of moment as the belief or disbelief of a Deity, is not only the highest arrogance, but the most extravagant madness. For it is at least probable that there is a God, because all mankind do believe one; and if there be one, it is of infinite moment that we should believe it, and act accordingly: and therefore for men to turn atheists out of mere singularity, is not only to believe there is no God, because it is probable there is, but to play

and dally with one's own fate, and run the hazard of being eternally miserable out of a wanton affectation of contradicting the judgment of mankind.

V. Another great cause of atheism is custom of drolling on and ridiculing the most serious things; a humour which hath strangely prevailed in this pleasant and jocular age, wherein the wild rovings of men's fancies into odd similitudes, startling metaphors, humorous expressions, and sportive representations of things, are grown more acceptable in almost all conversations than the most solid reason and discourse, and it is generally looked upon as a far more genteel and fashionable quality for a man to be witty than wise. Now though I do not deny but that wit in itself is a very useful and valuable endowment, and serves to many excellent purposes; as namely, to polish and adorn the most serious truths, and represent them to men's minds in the most comely and affecting dresses; to expose what is apparently base and ridiculous, and lash it with the satires it makes against itself; to quicken and give life to a solid argument, and render it more piercing and convictive; and, in a word, to endear our society, and give a relish and piquancy to our conversation, and to recreate our minds after we have been tired and cloyed with severer occupations; though wit, I say, be a very useful quality as to all these good purposes, yet unless a wise man hath the keeping it, that knows when, and where, and how to apply it, it is like wildfire that flies at rovers, runs hissing about, and blows up every thing that comes in its way without any respect or discrimination. And indeed the more grave and serious any thing is, the more prone it will be to expose and ridicule it:

for the life of wit consists in the surprisingness of its conceits and expressions, in making such smart or uncouth representations of things as are most apt to raise a pleasing wonder and amazement in those that hear us. Now there is nothing more surprising in its own nature, than to see or hear a serious thing sportfully represented, and dressed up in an antick and ridiculous disguise; the very exposing it in a garb and figure so unexpected, because so very unlike and unsuitable to itself, is apt of its own nature to surprise and amuse the spectators or hearers; which surprise, if he be a vain person, will tickle him in laughter, but if he be serious, will affect him with detestation and horror to see a serious thing so contemptibly treated. But the greatest part of men being of vain and trifling spirits, that are whiffled up and down in little levities of fancy, there is nothing commonly doth more gratefully surprise them and provoke their laughter, than ridiculous representations of serious arguments; and hence it comes to pass, that it is grown a great instance of wit among the generality of men to sport and play with serious things, to burlesque the sense of them, and apply them to ridiculous purposes; wherein, in reality, this mistaken sort of wit is nothing but dull and impudent buffoonery, and a very little wit, joined with a great deal of sauciness, will enable a man to make sport with the most serious arguments. For it is but clothing them in rude and porterly expressions, or misconstruing them to a profane or ludicrous sense, or debauching the phrases by which they are expressed to a silly or a wicked meaning, and it shall presently be cried up for an excellent jest, and the author of it dubbed a wit laureat. This there-

fore being so easy a way for dull people to advance themselves to the reputation of wits, hath of late years especially been mightily frequented by the impotent wellwishers to wit and ingenuity; and because religion hath been always esteemed the most serious thing in the world, therefore they fix upon that as the common theme of their raillery, considering that the more serious it is, the more it will surprise men to hear it burlesqued and drolled on. So that if they do but speak slightly and irreverently of God, or never so clownishly ridicule a mystery of religion, or clothe an obscene thought in a text of scripture; their sauciness will supply the defect of their wit, and men will laugh, not so much at the piquancy of their conceit, as at the boldness and presumption of it: and because their discourse hath the luck to be laughed at, they think themselves celebrated for the oracles of wit, and are thereby emboldened to proceed in their impious buffoonery, till at last they have drolled themselves into a contempt of God, and from thence into downright atheism. For though a jest be no argument, nor yet a loud laughter a demonstration, yet if you inspect the generality of our little pretenders to atheism, you will find this is the main foundation that their irreligion depends on; for their gift consists, not in arguing and demonstrating, but in such a set of fine phrases and terse oaths; and all the stock of learning they pretend to is a few shavings of wit, gathered out of plays and romances, and these they pin upon religion, as you have seen unhappy boys do rags at men's backs, to expose it to scorn and derision; and having accustomed themselves to treat it with such rude and porterly contempt and disinge-

nuity, it grows by degrees cheap and vile in their eyes, and at last is rejected by them as a ridiculous imposture; and if now, when they are urged with evidences of religion, they have but wit enough to answer reason with drollery, and to retort a jest to a demonstration, how gloriously do they imagine they have acquitted themselves, and with what triumphant shrugs do they celebrate their victory over the little man in black.

Now though for men to deride what they do not understand savours neither of learning nor good manners, and is equally unbecoming a gentleman and a scholar; and though for a man to venture to be damned for deriding of God and religion, is such a triumph of wit as argues the utter defeat of his reason, yet so long as there are vain men enough to be tickled with this profane sort of drollery, to be sure there will never want fools enough to venture on it. For when a fop will needs aspire to the reputation of a wit, he hath no other way but to dress up religion in a fool's coat, and expose it for a spectacle of derision; and then, how dull soever the conceit be, the stupendous presumption of it will surprise and amuse the company; and men will admire him just as they do ropedancers, for daring to perform what a wise man would tremble to attempt: and being thus emboldened by the admiration and laughter of his company, which the vain creature mistakes for a proof and evidence of his wit, he grows more pert and confident; and so fools and fleers on, till he hath toyed and laughed himself out of all sense of religion.

But, alas! what a desperate piece of folly is this, for men thus to sport and dally with the Almighty,

whose vengeance they can neither withstand nor endure; to point and make mouths at him to his face, and set him up as the finger-butt of their scorn and derision! For certainly if there be sins that can raise a cry loud enough to reach heaven, this, as a great author of our own hath expressed it, will be so far from whispering there, that it will give an alarm to the vengeance of Heaven, whose inflictions, like stones tumbling from the tops of towers, will by so much the more fatally crush those they light on, by how much the longer they are falling upon them. And therefore for men thus to dally with their own fate, to venture to be damned, that they may be thought to be witty, and expose themselves to endless wailing and woe, only to raise a present fit of laughter, is doubtless a far more desperate attempt, than it would be to play at the mouths of cannons while they are spitting fire, or to lay hold on a thunderbolt as it comes roaring down from the clouds.

But suppose there were neither evil nor danger in this impious practice, yet for men to conclude there is no God because they have the confidence to scorn and despise him, is altogether as ridiculous as their despising him is impious. For there is nothing in nature so real or serious, but may be drolled and rallied on: if a man will set his wits at work, he may break jests upon pain, and entertain his company with comical representations of the groans and agonies of dying; but it would be a jest indeed, should he droll himself into a belief that there are no such things as pain or death. But, alas! things are not to be altered by laughing at them; and how merry soever we may make ourselves with the belief and

notion of a Deity, we shall one day find in earnest, that he is not to be jested out of his being.

VI. Another cause of atheism is taking up religion, or opinions in religion, without examination. The generality of men do embrace their religion as a part of their fate, as the temper of their clime, or the entail of their ancestors; and the reason why they are Christians is, because Christianity had the luck to bespeak them first, and by its timely interposure to prepossess and forestall them. So that, in all probability, had Mahometism plied them first, they would have had as much faith for the Alcoran as they have now for the Bible. Now when men thus take up their religion they know not why, their minds must needs be left naked and defenceless to all the temptations of atheism. For when a man can render no reason for his religion, his faith hath nothing but blind prejudice to support it; and it is with his will that he believes, and not with his understanding: so that he may choose whether he will believe or no, because he hath no evidence to determine his understanding. And how unstable and insecure must his faith needs be, when it hath no other foundation but a fickle and inconstant will; when it lies at the mercy of his humour and inclinations, and it is in his power to determine his assent to that side of the question which is most for his interest! For now his faith being determined by his will, and his will by his interest, whenever he thinks it his interest that there should be no God, to be sure he will be ready enough to believe that there is none; and consequently as soon as he grows wicked enough to need atheism for a refuge from his conscience, he will betake himself thither in his own defence, and

endeavour by an obstinate disbelief of God's being, to shelter himself from the dread of his power. Thus when men's belief is not grounded upon reason and evidence, but stands tottering on the fickle foundation of their wills, it is liable to be blown down by every blast of temptation. And hence, I doubt not, in a great measure proceeds the irreligion of the age we live in; for if you survey the present sticklers for atheism, you will find they chiefly consist of the harebrained and uncatechised youths of the town, who never troubled themselves to understand the first principles of religion, nor to consider the dependence and connection of its doctrines, and know nothing at all either of the admirable contexture of the parts of it, or of the reason and evidence of the whole. For, alas! their study hath been employed another way, viz. in courtly forms of speech and punctilios of action, in fashionable garbs and oaths, and artificial luxuries, in conning of fine jests and modes of address, and retailing fragments of wit from plays and romances; but as for the severer and more useful studies, they bequeath them to the dull men of sense and reason.

Such as these are for the most part the sages that droll upon religion, and make jests upon the scriptures: and what wonder is it that such as these turn infidels, who are never able to render any reason of their faith? For how weak soever the arguments of infidelity are, it is a hard case if it cannot baffle that faith which hath no reason on its side to guard and defend it; especially when they are seconded with a man's lusts and inclinations, as to be sure the arguments of infidelity will always be. For when a man hath no reason for his faith, but a great many lusts

against it, the slenderest shows of probability will suffice to make him an infidel. But what an horrible neglect is it for men that have reason to distinguish between truth and falsehood, to take no care to inquire into the truth and evidence of their religion, in which their greatest interest is involved; but to wink hard, and believe at a venture they know not why or what? what is this but to cast lots for their souls, and throw cross or pile for their eternal salvation? They resolve, they say, to adhere to the religion of their ancestors; but whether that be true or false, they never inquire: so that if it be true, they may thank their stars for it, but if it be false, they have the worse luck. Thus they wholly commit themselves to the conduct of chance, to be conducted to heaven or hell as it happens; and as if those distant fates were indifferent to them, they concern not themselves to inquire whether the way they are in be the broad or the narrow, the right or the wrong, but even leave the event to determine it. And can any thing in the world be more wild or extravagant, than for men, who are so solicitous about their smaller concerns, who will not purchase an acre of land without examining the deeds and evidences by which the right to it is conveyed, thus to take up their religion upon trust, and stake their everlasting fate upon such a desperate venture? But then for men to take occasion to despise and reject religion from their own sottish neglect to inquire into the truth of it, is such an height of extravagance as no bedlam can parallel; it would be as reasonable for a man to put out his eyes, and then resolve not to believe there is a sun in the firmament, because he doth not see it, or to stop up his ears, and then

peremptorily deny the being of sounds, because he does not hear them: for, for men thus to graft infidelity upon ignorance, is only to heap one extravagance on another; if they understand not the evidence of religion, the more shame it is for them, but methinks it might very well become them to be modest and teachable till they do; and in the mean while to take care to inform themselves better; but then immediately to leap out of ignorance into atheism, is first to play the fool, and then run stark mad upon it.

VII. Another cause of atheism is men's measuring the truth or falsehood of religion by the practice of such as make the loudest pretence to it. When a man is unwilling to undergo the trouble of satisfying his own reason of the truth of his religion, his usual method is to inquire what other men think of it, who by the zealous profession which they make may be supposed to understand it better than himself; but because men's thoughts are secret and invisible, and do not always correspond with their words and professions; therefore to satisfy himself what other men think of religion, he concludes the safest way is to judge by what they do, and not by what they profess: and so far indeed he is in the right. For to be sure men's actions are a much more certain index of their thoughts than their words; and therefore, when he sees those who profess religion act as if they did not believe it, and observes how their words do run a-tilt at their practice, and how broadly their lives give the lie to their professions, he presently concludes, that, whatever they pretend, they are infidels in their hearts; and being once persuaded that those whom he thinks do

best understand religion do not believe it, he thence immediately concludes that they find no reason to believe it, and do only put on the profession of it as an angelical visor, being minded to play the devils in it with more credit and security. And by this popular way of reasoning, they conclude religion to be nothing but a politic device and engine, which wise men have contrived to beguile and manage the simple; and that whatsoever is pretended for it, it is a mere juggling-box which knaves play tricks with to delude and cozen fools. And of this way of men's reasoning themselves into atheism the age we live in is full of woful instances; for nowadays to scorn and despise religion is no longer the prerogative of wits and virtuosos, but the infection is spread and propagated into shops and stalls, and the rabble are become professors of atheism. Now whence should this proceed? Alas! it is not to be supposed that such persons as these should ever be able to philosophize themselves into infidelity, and turn atheists either upon Aristotle's or Epicurus's hypotheses; no, no, their argument lies nearer home, and more open to their capacities: they have seen a world of vile tricks played in our religious carnivals and masquerades; some making their religion a sanctuary for their treasons and rebellions; others gilding over their faction and sedition with a specious pretence of zeal for God's glory: some prosecuting their own revenge and ambition under the ensigns of pure worship and true protestant religion; others commuting for their excesses of riot with a clamorous zeal for decency and order; and others picking pockets with one hand, while they have been lifting up the other to heaven in devotion: the sight of which hath

tempted the rude and unthinking vulgar to look upon religion as a mere castle in the air, that hath no foundation but in the invention of knaves and in the faith of fools.

Now though there is no doubt to be made, but that these vile hypocrites, who have laid this stumblingblock in men's way, shall one day dearly answer for the ruin of those whom it occasioned to fall, and for thus exposing the credit and reputation of religion to the misprisions of those that do not understand it; yet it is a most inexcusable piece of folly for men thus to infer atheistical conclusions from the ill example of hypocritical professors. For, in the first place, to conclude a man an infidel because his actions run counter to the faith he pretends to, is very rash and fallacious. For do we not see men very often act against their consciences, and fly in the face of their own convictions? Why may we not then as fairly suppose those wicked actions we argue from to be the effects of an obstinate will as of an infidel judgment? But suppose it were true, that those men were all infidels that do thus act against their faith, doth it therefore follow that you must turn infidel too? If it be so unsafe and so unworthy of a man to carry his brains in other men's heads, what a shame is it to carry them in other men's heels, and to suffer his faith to be led by the tract of their examples through all the wild mazes of irreligion and atheism!

But you will say, by these men's examples you plainly see what a mystery of iniquity there is in religious pretences: and what then? Must religion be a cheat because bad men play tricks with it, and make it a cloak for their knavery? If so, then the

best things in the world are liable to suspicion; because there is nothing so good but what is capable of being prostituted to very ill purposes. I confess when we see so many cheats acted under the mask of religion, we have just reason to call it to a more severe examination, and to inquire more narrowly into the proofs and evidences upon which it is founded; but presently to reject religion, because knaves and hypocrites make bold to disguise themselves in it, is every whit as absurd and ridiculous, as if men should deny that there is any such virtue as chastity in the world, because there are common prostitutes that pretend to it.

VIII. Another cause of atheism is divisions and schisms, formed out of little opinions in religion. For it is natural to men to place a great part of their religion in those opinions for whose sake they divide and separate from each other; so that if hereafter they happen to be dissatisfied with those opinions, of which they are excessively fond at the present, they will be under a great temptation to suspect religion itself, as if that were as ill-grounded as those little opinions which they laid so great a stress on; and so after they have run through several sets of opinions, and in fine have discovered them to be all delusions, they are ready to conclude religion itself to be nothing but a system of lies and impostures. For as weak heads when they perceive the battlements shake are apt to suspect the foundations; so weak understandings will be prone to suspect even the fundamentals of religion, when once they perceive those darling notions totter which they have confidently presumed to superstruct thereupon.

And upon this account I make no doubt but that the irreligion of this age is very much to be attributed to the sects and divisions of it. For how many woful examples have we of persons who had once a great zeal and satisfaction in religion, that upon their causeless separation from the church's communion have run from sect to sect, and from one extravagant opinion to another, till at last, being convinced of the cheats and impostures of them all, they have totally discarded religion itself, and made their last resort into atheism. And as separating into parties, upon little differences in religion, exposes the separatists themselves to great temptations to atheism, so it doth those also who are indifferent on both sides, and stand engaged on neither part of the separation. For whilst these men behold the state of religion thus miserably broken and divided, and the professors of it crumbled into so many sects and parties, and each party spitting fire and damnation at its adversary; so that if all say true, or indeed any two of them in five hundred sects, which there are in the world, (and for all I know there may be five thousand,) it is five hundred to one but that every one is damned, because every one damns all but itself, and itself is damned by four hundred and ninety-nine; so that it is a mighty chance if in so great a volley of anathemas, which every one hath levelled at it, any one escape. When, I say, unengaged persons, that are not able to distinguish between the disputable opinions that constitute these sects, and the necessaries and essentials of religion, shall reflect upon this tumult and confusion of faiths, they will be apt to conclude, without further inquiry, that religion itself is nothing but an infinite

maze of disputable opinions, wherein men wander about in the dark, and justle and rencounter one another without any certain clew on either side to guide and direct their inquiries; under which misapprehension they will either damn all religion for a cheat, or hover about in eternal uncertainty, not knowing where, in so great a confusion of religions, to fix and settle their faith. And hereunto, I doubt not, is to be attributed a great part of the irreligion of this age. For while some men, by running themselves out of breath in pursuit of those *ignes fatui*, or new lights, that have broken and divided our communion, have at length quite tired out their zeal and religious pretences, and so are at length laid down in the mire of irreligion and open profaneness; others, by looking on, and beholding the wild divisions which these new lights have made, have been tempted to run away from religion itself, as if that were only a labyrinth of uncertain opinions, contrived on purpose to distract and bewilder men's brains.

Now though the authors of these divisions, whosoever they are, are doubtless highly accountable to God for all that irreligion which attends them, yet from hence for men to draw atheistical conclusions is much more imputable to the perverseness of their wills, than to the weakness of their understandings.

For in the first place, what if you have discovered some opinions in religion to be false and erroneous, of the truth of which you were once very confident; doth it therefore follow, that there is nothing certain in religion? If so, you may as well conclude that there is nothing certain in the mathematics neither, since some men have been as confident of the truth

of false axioms in geometry, as ever you could be of false propositions in religion. That you were once over-confident in a disputable matter was your own fault and folly; but must it therefore follow that religion is a cheat, because you have been rash and inconsiderate? And what though you once laid the great stress of your religion upon an opinion which you now discern is erroneous, must religion needs suffer for your mistake, and be branded for an imposture, because you took that for religion which was not? For there are a thousand propositions about religion, which have been zealously disputed for and against, which have torn men into sects, and been the religion of the separate communions they have formed and denominated, that yet are very remote superstructures on the true foundations of religion, and may be true or false, believed or disbelieved, without any damage to religion. And therefore, before you suspect the truth of religion itself, upon your discovering the falsehood of any particular opinion, you ought in all reason to consider whether that opinion be so essential to religion as that it cannot subsist without it; for if it be not, it is the most unreasonable thing in the world to infer a suspicion of the truth of religion from the falsehood of propositions that have little or no dependence on it, and to reject the gold and the precious stones for the sake of the wood and hay and stubble that have been superstructed upon them. And then,

2. What can be more absurd than for men to reject religion, because men's opinions about it have been so divided? For if you survey the several divisions of Christians, you will find they generally concur in all the necessary and essential doctrines of

religion, and that the opinions wherein they divide are for the most part such unnecessary speculations, as that it is almost indifferent to religion whether they be true or false; and with what reason can we suspect the truth of necessary doctrines, wherein all are agreed, because there are disagreements in unnecessary ones? Because there are some propositions in the mathematics about which the opinions of the mathematicians are divided, shall we therefore suspect the truth of all those wherein they are agreed? For if their disagreement be an argument of the falsehood of the former, why should not their agreement be as good an argument of the truth of the latter? But how much soever men's opinions about religion may be divided, all that can be thence inferred is, that some men are mistaken; and while some men judge of religion by their passions and interests, and others by the prejudices of their education, it is impossible it should be otherwise. But for men, in the midst of such apparent causes of difference, to resolve to be of no religion till all are agreed in one, is just as wise and as rational as if they should determine not to go to dinner till all the clocks in the town strike twelve together.

IX. And lastly, another great cause of atheism is the profane and careless neglect of God's public worship. For men of secular lives, whose minds are always engaged in this eternal hurry of worldly affairs, are too prone to forget God, and all their concerns in religion and another world; and even their conversing so much with these sensitive things which are always before them, and are continually crowding in upon their thoughts, doth naturally indispose them to exercise their faculties about divine

and spiritual objects, and render their minds ὀπίσθω βαρεῖς, *unfit* and *unable* to ascend to the contemplation of God. And therefore God hath appointed the stated times of public worship, on purpose to withdraw men from their secular pursuits, that so they may be at leisure to retire into themselves, to recollect their scattered thoughts, and awake their minds to a sense of piety and religion; which can by no way so effectually be performed as by the solemnities of public worship, wherein our remembrance of God is not only refreshed, and our piety to him excited and directed by the public instructions, but our natural sense of religion is also actuated and intended by the mutual concurrence and example of each other's devotion. Thus, after our religion hath been slackened by our worldly cares and delights, it is daily wound up again by the returns of our public worship, and so the sense of God is still kept alive in our minds. When men therefore turn their backs upon the public worship, and devote the holy seasons of it to their secular business or pleasures, it is not to be wondered at, that their sense of a divine power, which they seldom or never think of, should by degrees decay and wear off; and that that being extinguished, they should sink into irreligion and atheism. For when once men have worn out their sense of a Deity, and, as the consequence of that, are broke loose from all the ties and obligations of conscience, they can have no other principle but atheism to warrant their actions; and when once they have abandoned all sense and remembrance of God, so that he is not in all their thoughts, they are in a fair forwardness to infidelity. For though as yet they do not actually disbelieve his existence, so neither

do they actually believe it: for how should they actually believe that which they have no sense or thought of? So that in this insensible state their faith is concerned neither one way nor the other, nor are they at all solicitous whether there be a God or no. Thus, from their profane neglect of God's worship, men naturally slide into an habitual senselessness and incogitancy of him; and from thence to not believing: and from thence to disbelieving him is an easy and almost necessary transition.

Of the truth of which the age we live in will furnish us with too many sorrowful instances. For as this nation, which hath been always remarked for a grave, serious, and religious genius, was never so generally tainted with atheism as now; so neither was it ever chargeable with such a general neglect of the public worship of God, which for several ages after the reformation was duly frequented and devoutly celebrated, till, by the prevalence of our restless sects and factions, the discipline of the church was gradually weakened, and at last totally destroyed; in the happy days before which, the families of each parish went hand in hand together to the house of God, and with one heart and voice celebrated his praise and worship; and to absent oneself ordinarily from the public assemblies was hardly consistent with the reputation of being a Christian. By which means their natural sense and dread of the divine power being continually awakened and revived, they were not only secured by it from all atheistical impressions, but also animated and excited to a pious and sober conversation. But the spirit of schism prevailing against the power and discipline of the church, till it had utterly disabled it from re-

straining the wantonness of that crooked and perverse generation; some incorporated themselves into separate communions, and others, under pretence of so doing, withdrew from the public assemblies to the common resorts of idleness, drunkenness, and debauchery; and whilst the masters took the liberty of conscience to go to conventicles, the servants, pretending to be of a different persuasion, assumed the liberty of will to go to taverns and alehouses; insomuch that it grew a common observation, that there have been more young people debauched on the Lord's day than all the week after, whilst, under pretence of joining with a different communion, they have taken occasion to withdraw themselves from the inspection of their parents and masters. And till once our schisms and divisions are cured, it will be impossible to prevent this ill practice, unless we will be so unjust as to deny that liberty of conscience to our servants, which with so much clamour and confidence we demand of our governors. And thus by degrees profaneness hath insinuated itself under the covert of schism, and liberty of conscience became a common sanctuary for the licentious neglect and contempt of God's worship, till at last it grew so common and fashionable, that it almost ceased to be scandalous. Yea, so far at length hath this impious humour prevailed, that to go to church, and be devout, is among too many men grown a note of disgrace, and the character of a priestridden fool; and a man is hardly looked upon as fit for genteel conversation, that knows any other use of a holiday, but only to be at leisure to lie abed, or to game or drink and debauch; by which neglect and contempt of the worship of God, that

natural sense of him, which should have been quickened and cherished by it, hath been gradually worn out of men's minds; the consequence of which is all that atheism and infidelity that overspreads this present age. For when once men have renounced the worship of God, and in consequence are abandoned of their natural sense of his majesty, they are upon the brink of atheism, into which their own vile lusts, whose interest it is that there should be no God, will easily precipitate them. But, alas! how ridiculous as well as impious it is for men to take occasion from their own neglect of God's worship to renounce the belief of his being! What is this but to tail one folly to another, and to second extravagance with madness? It would make one amazed to think that ever reasonable beings should be so besotted, as to live in a world over which an almighty Being presides, who sees all their actions, and in whose hands all events are which concern them, and even the everlasting fate of their souls, and yet take no more notice of him, pay no more respect or veneration to him, than if he were the merest trifle or most insignificant cipher in the whole creation. But sure, when men have been guilty of such a black and horrid impiety, one would think their wisest course for the time to come should be to repent of it, and to endeavour to compensate for their past profaneness by the strictness and sincerity of their future devotion: but for men to proceed from neglecting God's worship to denying his being, is to do worse because they have done ill, and thereby to inflame the provocation, as if they were resolved to render their condition desperate, because they have been so foolhardy as to render it dangerous.

And thus I have given a short account of the common causes of atheism, which, you see, are all derived from men's wills, and not from their reason. For this I do most firmly believe, that the arguments of God's existence are so plain and convincing, that no man ever was or can be an atheist without some inexcusable fault in his will.

SECT. II.

Of the inexcusable folly and unreasonableness of atheism.

THE next thing I proposed was to endeavour to confirm and establish this great principle of religion, viz. the belief of a God, by representing the great folly and unreasonableness of atheism. In discoursing of which I shall meddle no more than needs must with the proofs and arguments of a Deity; because, as I have shewed before, it is not for want of arguments that men turn atheists, but for want of consideration and an honest will; and that the bias that carries them towards infidelity is not in their understandings, but in their wills and affections; that it is only their partiality to their lusts that inclines them to atheism; and that the reason why they are so ready to believe there is no God is, because they wish in their hearts that there were none. To establish the belief of a God, therefore, I shall endeavour to represent the folly and unreasonableness of men's being partial on the side of atheism, supposing it were disputable whether there be a God or no; and this will evidently appear in the following particulars:

I. The atheist concludes against the dignity of

human nature, and renders it not only mean but ridiculous.

II. He concludes against the very being and well-being of human society.

III. He concludes against that which is the main support and comfort of human life.

IV. He concludes for that side of the question which is infinitely the most unsafe and hazardous.

V. He concludes for the unsafest side of the question upon the highest uncertainties.

VI. He plainly contradicts himself in his conclusion.

I. The atheist concludes against the dignity of human nature, and thereby renders it not only mean but ridiculous. For the chief worth and dignity of human nature consists in its relation to God, without whom its noblest and most excellent faculties are in a great measure useless and insignificant: for if there be no God, the objects of our five senses are the sole entertainment of our understanding and will, and we have no other use of these mighty faculties, (which, if there were any such thing as an infinite truth and goodness, are naturally capable of enjoying them,) but only to consult and choose the gratifications of our sense and the pleasures of this perishing body. For, excepting God, there is no such thing in nature as a spiritual enjoyment, no good to be found but what is prepared to entertain the boundless liquorishness of our carnal appetites; and had we none but such as these to consult for, our reason, which is the crown and glory of our natures, would have nothing else to do but to cater for our flesh, and we should have an understanding and will to no other purpose

but to enable us to play the brutes with more skill and sagacity. And indeed, setting God aside, we are so far from having the advantage of brutes, by being rational, that we are rather so much the more wretched and despicable than they. For as for the happiness of this life, which wholly consists of sensual good, the senses and appetites we have in common with the beasts that perish are sufficient for the enjoyment of it; and with these we might relish it as well without our reason as with it: we might eat and drink and sleep, and enjoy all the pleasures of a brute, with as much gust and savour as we do now with our reason. For if we were brutes, we should do as brutes do; we should weary ourselves no longer with vain pursuits, nor vex ourselves with fruitless expectations, nor torment ourselves with the fears of a disappointment; but even take our pleasures when our appetites craved them, and they freely offered themselves to our enjoyment. And though our reason doth sometimes cook the enjoyments of our sense, and give them a higher relish and luxury, yet this advantage is very much outweighed by the many regrets, and remorses, and stinging reflections it intermingles with our pleasures: so that had we only the faculties of brutes, I am verily persuaded we should more sincerely enjoy the happiness of the brutal nature, but to be sure we should bear our miseries with much more ease and cheerfulness. For supposing there is no God, our reason can afford us no solid support under any calamity; the main arguments of comforts, as I shall shew by and by, being derived from the consideration of God and his providence; which being taken away, I doubt not but we should bear our miseries without

our reason much better than with it. For then we should neither be terrified at the approach of them, nor tormented with despair under them; then we should neither multiply them with false opinions, nor enrage them with bitter reflections on the causes of them; but, whenever they happen, bear them as beasts do, without any other pain or uneasiness than what they necessarily impressed on our senses; which would render them a thousand times more tolerable to us than all our arguments can do, supposing we have no God nor providence to argue from.

So that were that true which the atheist concludes for, viz. That there is no God, it would follow, that reason in a man serves to no other purpose but to render him more wretched and despicable. If there be a God indeed, our rational faculties are of excellent use; as having an object commensurate to their widest capacities, and every way fit and worthy to employ and exercise them; an infinite truth for our understanding to dive into, and an infinite good for our wills and affections to pursue and embrace. But if there be nothing to be enjoyed by us, but what is carnal and sensual, our reason is so far from being our ornament and perfection, that it is the plague and disgrace of our natures.

For for any nature to have more faculties than what are necessary to its happiness is monstrous; and therefore, had we nothing to enjoy but the happiness of brutes, it would be a deformity to our natures to have the faculties of angels; because these faculties would be in vain, there being no adequate object in the nature of things to employ and entertain them. So that were the doctrine of the atheist true, it would cashier our reason for a vain and use-

less faculty; a thing that serves our nature to little other purpose but only to vex and disquiet it. And what man, that hath any regard or reverence for himself, would ever be fond of a belief that thus sinks and depreciates him, and lays the glory of his nature in the dust? For if it be true that there is no God, it is as true that man is a most despicable creature, that his reason, upon which he so much values himself, is a frivolous and impertinent faculty; a faculty that can serve him to no higher purpose than only to be a cook and a tailor to his body, to study sauces and fashions for it; and that, while it serves him in this, disserves him in a thousand other instances, in mingling his pleasures with gall and wormwood, with fears and impatiences, anxieties and remorses; and in aggravating and putting stings into his griefs and calamities. So that when all is done, the only thing that makes it worth the while for a man to be reasonable is, that there is a Being of infinite perfection to be known and loved, and imitated and adored by him; and to deny the existence of this blessed Being is infinitely to undervalue ourselves, and to eclipse the glory and dignity of our natures. So that by being partial to atheism we are partial to our own shame and disgrace, and industriously consult the reproach and infamy of human nature: for the Devil himself cannot affix a blacker scandal on our reason than what is implied in this assertion, That there is no God.

And as it lays the greatest reproach upon our nature, so it likewise renders us the most ridiculous of all beings. For there are certain affections interwoven with human nature, which, if there be no God, are shamefully ridiculous; such as the dread of

invisible powers, the sense of good and evil, and the anxious expectation of a judgment to come; all which are so deeply inlaid in our beings, as that with all our arts and reasoning we cannot totally erase them. And even the atheists themselves, who have tried all possible ways of extinguishing them, have found by experience that the utmost they can do is to damp and stupify them at present; but that in despite of them they will revive and awake again when death or danger approaches them. Now how ridiculous are these affections in human natures, if there be no such being as a God! For upon this supposal, we have passions that have no objects in the nature of things, that have nothing in the world to move and affect them but wild chimeras, flying dragons, and castles in the air; and whereas all other beings have real objects in nature corresponding to their several instincts and affections, (for so the hare hath a natural dread of a dog, the sheep of a wolf, the mouse of a cat, the toad of a spider, all the objects of which dread have a real existence,) poor silly man, supposing there is no God, naturally trembles at an invisible nothing, and is horribly afraid of the shadow of an imagination. So that if the atheist's opinion were true, the ape, that looks pale at the sight of a snail, and flies as if he feared lest that slow creature should overtake and devour him, would be a great deal less ridiculous than timorous man, whose nature is thus hagged with frightful imaginations of invisible powers and a judgment to come.

And what man that hath any reverence for the human nature within him would ever suffer himself to be bribed for an opinion that doth not only undervalue, but deride and ridicule it. Should you hear

yourself branded with a contemptible character, or ranked among apes or any such ridiculous animals, you would doubtless be so far from courting the author of it, that you would resent it as a great affront, and think yourselves obliged in honour to return the provocation; and yet for the sake of a few base lusts, which are the shame and scandal of your natures, you espouse the cause of atheism, though it derides and affronts you to your face, and stains the glory of your natures with the most contemptible and ridiculous character in the world.

II. The atheist concludes against the very being and well-being of human society. For the soul that penetrates through all human society, and compacts and unites it in a regular body, is religion, or the sense and acknowledgment of a divine power, without which all the parts of the corporation of mankind, like the members of a dead body, must necessarily disband and fly abroad into atoms. For a formed society, which is an united multitude, consists in the harmony and consent of its members mutually united by laws and agreements, and disposed into a regular subordination to one another, neither of which can any human society long continue, without the belief and acknowledgment of a God.

For without this, in the first place, it is impossible that the parts of any society should continue united by laws and agreement. For it is from the belief of a God that all the obligations of conscience are derived; so that take away that, and these must dissolve; and when the obligations of conscience are dissolved, there is nothing but men's temporal interests can oblige them to conform to those laws and

mutual agreements by which they are united to one another. And if it be their interest only that obliges them to be just and faithful to their mutual agreements, they will be equally obliged to be unjust and unfaithful, whenever it is their interest to be so. So that this principle, which only obliges them to be honest while it is for their advantage, will as effectually oblige them to be knaves whenever the case is altered; and things being reduced to this issue, there remains no foundation of trust and mutual confidence among men. For what can any man's promise signify, if he be under no obligation but interest? To be sure, if it be for his interest, he will do what he says without any promise; but if it be not, what promise can oblige him? You will say, it is his interest to keep his word, because otherwise he will forfeit his reputation for the future: but pray what reputation can a man have to forfeit, that owns no other law or obligation but his interest? or who will ever presume upon that man's word and engagement, whose avowed principle it is to be honest no longer than he can gain by it? Thus atheism, you see, resolves all our obligations into our worldly interest, which is so fickle and mutable a principle, so dependent upon chance and the inconstancies of fortune, that there is no hold to be taken of those that are governed by it. For that which is their interest to-day may be their disadvantage to-morrow; and if it should so happen, they must steer a contrary course, or else act contrary to their leading principle. So that for men to trust each other upon this fickle principle is all one as to rely upon the constancy of a weathercock, which every contrary wind turns to a contrary position. And things

being once reduced to this issue, that men can place no trust or confidence in one another, their society will soon become their greatest plague and vexation. For every man will be forced to stand upon his guard against every man, and keep himself reserved and retired within himself; till at last, out of mutual distrust and jealousy of one another, they are forced to withdraw their society, and to live apart in several dens, for fear of being entrapped and devoured by each other.

And as atheism cuts in sunder those ligaments of mutual trust and agreement by which the parts of human society are united; so it also dissolves that regular subordination that is between them. Plutarch observes in his treatise against Colot, Πόλις ἄν μοι δοκεῖ μᾶλλον ἐδάφους χωρὶς, ἢ πολιτεία τῆς περὶ θεῶν δόξης ἀναιρεθείσης παντάπασι, σύστασιν λαβεῖν, ἢ λαβοῦσα τηρῆσαι. i. e. It seems to be more possible for a city to stand without ground, than for a commonwealth to subsist and continue without the belief of a God; which is indeed the only firm foundation whereupon all government and society depends. For if there be no God, what should oblige any to own any superior, or pay any submission? And if his interest be his only obligation to his superiors, whenever he can mend his fortune by rebelling against them, that very same interest which at present restrains him from it will with equal force invite him to it. Nor will it signify any thing that we are obliged to the contrary by oaths of fidelity and allegiance: for if it be our interest to be faithful to the government, our own prudence and discretion will oblige us to it without such oaths as well as with them; but if it be not our

interest, and this be the only principle that obliges us, no oath or engagement can hold us. So that in this state of things all the security that governors can have of their subjects is, that they will not rebel when they are not able; but as soon as they think it safe, to be sure they will think it lawful; which being once admitted, will undermine the very foundation of government, and utterly dissolve that regular subordination by which human society is supported. Whereas admitting that the laws of our prince are bound upon us by the authority of a sovereign Lord who can render us eternally happy or miserable, we are obliged to obey him by all that we can hope or fear, and have all the engagements to loyalty that the reflections on a happy or miserable eternity can lay upon us. What a prodigious folly is it therefore for men to embrace atheism as their interest, which doth thus directly tend to deprive us of all the comforts of society, by involving us in eternal confusions and disorders! For if once we take away mutual trust and government from the world, both which have a necessary dependence on the belief of a God, we break all the harmony of human society, and convert it into a commonwealth of cannibals. And what man in his wits could ever be fond of an opinion that proclaims open war with mankind, and is pregnant with consequents so fatal and destructive to the world? Can we think it more advantageous to us that atheism should be true, than that human society should be upheld and perpetuated? Or are the pleasures we reap from the lusts which incline us to atheism comparably so valuable as the benefits which accrue to us from being formed

and united into regular corporations? If not, how apparently do we engage against our own interest, when we espouse the cause of irreligion!

III. The atheist concludes against that which is the main support and comfort of human life. For while we are in this world our best and securest condition is exposed to a world of sad and uncomfortable accidents, which we have neither the wisdom to foresee nor the power to prevent: so far are we from being self-sufficient as to our worldly happiness, that there are a thousand causes upon which we depend for it that are not in our power to dispose of: and in such a state of uncertainty, wherein we are continually bandied to and fro, and made the game of inconstant fortune, what quiet or security can we enjoy within ourselves without believing that there is a God at the helm, that steadily overrules all events that concern us, and steers and directs them by the invariable compass of his own infinite wisdom and goodness? For considering how poor and indigent our nature is, how we are fain to seek abroad, and to go a begging from door to door for our happiness; how we depend upon chance, and are secure of nothing we possess, or desire, or hope for; how prone we are to be alarmed with the prospect of a sad futurity, and to magnify distant evils in our own apprehensions; how apt we are to aggravate our miseries by our impatience and despair, and to pill our enjoyments by expecting more from them than their natures will afford: considering these things, I say, which way can we turn ourselves without a God? or where can we repose our restless thoughts but in his providence? Verily, could I be tempted to believe that there is no God,

I should look upon human nature, in its perfect circumstances, as the most forlorn and abandoned part of the creation, and wish that I had had the luck to be of any other species than that of a rational animal. For in the state I am, I find myself liable to a thousand dangers against which I have no sanctuary, and under which I have no support, if there be no God to govern the world; and having such a dismal prospect of things before me, and a busy mind within me, that will be continually working on and aggravating the evils of it, what can I do with myself, or how can I enjoy myself, without a God to rely on? Upon the supposal that he is, and that he governs the world, I can easily relieve myself under the most dismal apprehensions; I can fairly conclude, and safely depend on it, that if I take care, by my submission to God's will, to make him my friend, he will either prevent the evils I apprehend, or support me under them, or convert them to my good; either of which is sufficient to set my heart at ease, and instate me in a quiet enjoyment of myself. But now by giving up the belief of a God, I throw away all these considerations, and leave myself utterly destitute and supportless. For what solid ground of support can I have, when I have no manner of security, either that the evils I dread shall be prevented, or that I shall have a proportionable strength to bear them, or that I shall ever reap any good or advantage from them; without which considerations, every evil that threatens or befalls me is pure unmingled misery, against which there is no fence or cordial in reason or philosophy. For suppose I should agree with the ancient moralists, that every ill accident that befalls me is fatal, as

being the effect of some necessary cause that is without my power or disposal, and therefore it is unreasonable for me to grieve at it: this will be so far from any way mollifying the anguish of my mind, that it will rather enrage and inflame it. For that my calamity is fatal, so that it is not in my power to avoid or remove it, is rather an aggravation than a diminution of it. Or suppose I should reason as the same moralists otherwhiles do, Why should I grieve at the evils that befall me, when, alas! my grief will be so far from lessening them, that it will rather increase and multiply them, contribute new venom to their stings, and render them more pungent and dolorous? what a faint cordial would it be to my oppressed mind, to consider that my grief will but augment my load! It is some ease to a dejected soul to vent its griefs in moans and lamentations, which, whilst she seeks to smother in a sullen silence, like imprisoned wind, will breed a colick in her bowels: and is it not a sad thing that I must deny myself the only solace of a miserable man, for fear of augmenting my misery? Again, suppose I should reason thus with the same authors, that afflictions are indifferent things, and in themselves neither good nor evil, but indifferently improveable into mischiefs or benefits; this, I confess, were a good argument, supposing that the affliction came from a good God, who can extract good out of all evils, and render the rankest poison medicinal; but otherwise you will find it is but a cold comfort to call your misery by another name: for if there be no God to temper our evils, and to ordain and direct them to wise and good ends, we shall find in the issue they will prove

themselves evils to us, by what soft name soever we may call them. Again, and to name no more, suppose I should reason thus; that to bear afflictions with an unconcerned mind is brave, and manly, and generous; that it is an argument of a great and heroic mind, that hath raised itself above the reach of misfortunes: I readily confess so it is, supposing a man hath good reason thus to bear his afflictions, which is the question in debate, for then it is the triumph of reason over passion, and an illustrious instance of a well-fortified mind; but if we have no reason for it, all these glorious words, *generous*, *brave*, &c. are nothing but empty flash, and mere rhodomontado. For, for a man to be unconcerned with evils without reason, is so far from being generous and brave, that it is an argument of his brutal stupidity and foolhardiness. But yet, supposing that there is no God, these are the main arguments we have to support ourselves under any calamity. But, alas! such real griefs of ours are not to be redressed with petty sayings and grave sentences, which, though they may look takingly at a distance, will, when we come to apply and experience them, force us to pronounce as Job did of his friends; *Miserable comforters are ye all, and physicians of no value.* So that were we left destitute of God and a providence, and of all those blessed supports we derive from thence, we were of all creatures the most miserable. For in this state of things we are compassed about with miseries and misfortunes, and, which without God is our greatest misfortune, we have a thing called reason within our breast which is very ingenious in giving stings

to our miseries, and vexing us with cutting reflections on them, but it is not able to qualify one grief, or minister one dram of solid comfort to us.

But when we lift up our eyes to God, there are such vast and innumerable comforts flowing down to us, from the consideration of his nature and providence, as are sufficient, not only to allay our sorrows, but to convert them into joys and triumphs. For in him we behold not only an infinite wisdom, that always knows what is best for us, but also an infinite goodness, that always wills what it knows to be so, and an infinite power that always does what it wills: and whilst we see and consider this, there is nothing in the world can happen amiss to us; welcome pain, welcome pleasure, welcome loss, welcome gain, welcome disgrace, welcome honour: for if we have but God our friend we may securely depend upon it, that whatsoever befalls us is best for us.

Who but a madman therefore would ever espouse the cause of atheism, or make it his interest to exclude God out of the world? Indeed were he an envious, malicious, or tyrannical being, that repined at the happiness of his creatures, and watched all opportunities to plague or destroy them, it were but reasonable we should endeavour to quit our minds of the belief of him; but to imagine it our interest to believe there is no such being in the world as a good God, that out of the immense benignity of his nature espouses our interest and takes care of our happiness; that understands our wants and compassionates our sufferings, and is able and willing to support and relieve us; that requires nothing of us but what is for our good, and will infinitely reward us for doing that which is best for ourselves; that

connives at our follies, and pities our infirmities, and upon our unfeigned repentance is ready to be reconciled to us, even when we wilfully and presumptuously provoke him; to imagine it, I say, our interest to shake off the belief of such a blessed being as this, is the utmost height of folly and madness. For it were doubtless a thousand times more tolerable for men that the sun should be pulled down from the firmament, and all the lights of heaven extinguished, than that the belief of a God should be banished from the world, the absence of which would overspread mankind with such a dismal night of horror and despair, and blackness and darkness, as would render all wise and considering men weary of their beings, and cause them to wish a thousand times over, as for the utmost good they could devise for themselves, O that there were such a being as a God at the helm of the world, that so the affairs of it might be steered by an infinite power, that is always directed by an infinite wisdom, and always biassed and inclined by an infinite goodness! What then can be more brutish or irrational than for the sake of a few base lusts, that are the scandal of our nature, the bane of our society, the vexation of our lives, and the disturbance of all our happiness, to banish the belief of a God from our minds, which is the foundation of our hope, and the only support we can rationally depend on.

IV. The atheist concludes for that side of the question which is infinitely the most unsafe and hazardous. He who believes there is a God, and acts accordingly, runs a very small and inconsiderable venture, if in the issue of things he should chance to be mistaken; he only ventures the dissatisfying a

few extravagant lusts, the crossing some irregular inclinations of his nature, which if he had gratified would have vexed and tormented him, and entangled his life with a thousand ill circumstances; he only ventures prayers and some tears, some watchings, and strugglings, and contentions with himself, and perhaps some reproaches and persecutions for righteousness' sake; in exchange for which he hath commonly a healthful and a prosperous, an even, safe, and contented life, a quiet and a triumphant conscience, and a joyous expectation of a blissful eternity to come, which do outweigh all the incommodities he ventures, all the pains he undergoes, and all the pleasures of which he debars himself; and if in the conclusion, when he resigns up his breath, it appears that there is neither God, nor heaven, nor hell, his condition will be altogether as good as the atheist's, with whom he will sleep quietly in the same dust under the same everlasting insensibility.

But, on the contrary, the atheist, by believing that there is no God, and acting accordingly, runs the most desperate hazard in the world. For besides that he throws away the main support and comfort of his life, and lays himself open to all contingencies, and resigns up the satisfaction of a good conscience, together with the hope of a blessed futurity, and all the innumerable joys it abounds with; besides all which, he ventures to be eternally wretched and miserable in the world to come, and exposes himself naked and defenceless to the unquenchable wrath of an everlasting God; in exchange for all which, he hath no other present compensation, but the pleasures of a riotous and tumultuary life, which do always die away in the enjoyment, and are gene-

rally dashed and sophisticated with a thousand very sad and uncomfortable circumstances. And then if, when he concludes this present scene of life, he should find himself mistaken in his atheistical confidence, and be unexpectedly summoned to the tribunal of that God whose being and authority he hath so peremptorily denied and affronted, and from thence be transmitted into a dismal eternity, there to languish out an everlasting existence in remediless woes and unpitied lamentations; how would it astonish and confound him to find his confident infidelity baffled by such a woful experiment, when, instead of being asleep in a state of silence and insensibility, which was the thing he depended on, he shall find himself wafted to a strange shore, and there landed among devils and miserable spirits, in a state of endless, easeless, and remediless calamity! How blank and forlorn will the fool look, to find himself thus fatally mistaken! and yet, for all he knows, this may be the result and issue of things. So that it is a very small hazard, you see, that good men run, compared with that of the atheist's; for should they be mistaken, their condition will be as good as his at the winding up of the bottom; but if they should not, it will be infinitely better.

It is storied of a certain hermit, who, being retired from the world, led a very severe and mortified life, that being one day met by two cardinals, who were riding by with a very pompous equipage, was thus accosted by them; Father, why should you thus mortify and macerate yourself, by retiring from the glories and pleasures of this life? Suppose now that after all your religious severities there should be neither a God nor a future world to reward you,

would it not be egregious folly in you thus to throw away present enjoyments for future nothings? To which the good man presently returned this answer; But, sirs, suppose there should be a God and a future world to punish you, would it not be egregious folly in you to run such a desperate venture as you do, of being everlastingly miserable for the sake of a few momentary honours and advancements? Upon which, as the story saith, the cardinals being convinced, went away very pensive. And herein, doubtless, the honest hermit was very much in the right. For were it a moot point, whether there be a God or no, one would think, in a matter of such unspeakable moment, and where the hazard on each side is so infinitely unequal, there is no man in his wits but would choose the safest side, and make that his rule and principle to live by. In this therefore the atheist is justly chargeable with the most desperate folly; that whereas at least he might be safe, if not eternally happy, by believing that there is a God, and acting accordingly, he rather chooses to venture being eternally miserable, by believing there is none, and acting as if there were none. In short, this is the plain state of the case; If I believe that God is, and act consonantly, I shall be safe if he be not, and eternally happy if he be; whereas, if I believe that he is not, I am sure to be miserable for ever if he be, and am only safe from being miserable for ever if he be not: and this being the case, I leave any man to judge which of the two is in prudence more eligible, the peradventure of being happy for ever, or of being miserable for ever, supposing both to be equally probable. But,

V. The atheist concludes for the unsafest side of

the question upon the greatest uncertainties in the world. One would think, before a man assented to a conclusion, the consequence of which, if he should be mistaken, will be for ever fatal to him, he should be so wise at least as to look before he leap, and satisfy himself of the grounds he concludes on, and not to give up his assent upon every doubtful and uncertain appearance. Now that part of the question which the atheist assents to is of such mighty consequence, as that should it prove false he is lost for ever; and therefore one would think it concerned him to be very sure of his hand, and take care that his assent be founded upon very strong and undeniable evidence; instead of which he assents at a venture, and grounds his belief upon the most sandy foundations. For,

I. He concludes for a pure negative.

II. He concludes for it upon a bare possibility.

III. He concludes for it against the best evidence that the contrary will admit.

I. He concludes for a pure negative. All men are agreed, that it is a very hard thing to prove a negative; but to prove a pure negative is impossible, unless the existence of the thing which it denies implies an express contradiction. It is true, where a thing visibly exists, so that we can perceive as well how it doth not exist as how it doth, we may with as good evidence deny as affirm; but as for pure negatives, which deny the very existence of such things as may possibly exist, it is impossible to be certain of them without an infinite understanding. For before we can be sure that what is not in our understanding is not in nature, we must be sure, that whatsoever is in nature is in our understanding;

otherwise a thousand things may be, though we do not understand them. As for instance, unless I were sure that I had the perfect map or geography of such a country in my head, it is impossible I should be sure that there is no such town, or city, or region belonging thereunto; and so, unless I were sure that the cosmography or universal map of nature were perfectly delineated on my understanding, I cannot positively affirm that such or such a being doth not actually exist. So that, as a great divine of our own hath well observed upon this very argument, after all that can be said against a thing, this will still be true; that many things possibly are which we know not of, and that many things more may be than are. For unless our understanding were extended to the whole compass of nature, there may be, for all we know, ten thousand things in nature which are not in our understanding. So that concerning pure negatives we can never be certain, unless the things which they deny be absolutely impossible, and imply, in the very notion of their existence, a plain contradiction; which cannot be said of the existence of God. For by God we mean nothing but a being endowed with all possible perfections; and to say that it is impossible that there should be any such being as is endowed with all the perfections that it is possible for a being to be endowed with, is to assert possibilities impossible, which is a contradiction in terms. Since therefore this negative, that there is no God, denies that which is possible in its nature, and which implies not the least shadow of contradiction, it is impossible, supposing it were true, for any finite understanding to be certain of it. What man in his wits then would

ever presume to deny the being of God, and to stake his everlasting fate on it, when he knows beforehand that he cannot be sure that his denial is true, and that if it prove false he is lost for ever. Alas! what is this but to throw dice for our souls, and to venture our salvation on a wild uncertainty.

II. The atheist concludes for a pure negative upon a bare possibility. One would think, in a matter of such infinite moment, men should at least be so wise as not to conclude without strong probabilities where they can find no certainty to rely on; but so desperately foolhardy is the atheist, as to suspend his faith, and with that his salvation, upon the bare possibility that there may be no God. For when he is urged with those arguments of God's being that are drawn from the beautiful contrivance of the world, he hath no other way to evade them, but by endeavouring to demonstrate how by the necessary laws of matter and motion things might possibly be shuffled together as they are, without the agency and direction of a God; and yet even in this attempt so many inextricable difficulties present themselves as have puzzled and confounded the acutest wits that were ever engaged in it; and while with all their art and contrivance they have been framing their hypothesis of the existence of this world without a God, they have been forced, not only to beg some principles, but also to assert others that upon examination have been found repugnant to the nature of things: and when all is done, if both were true, yet are they altogether insufficient to solve a thousand phenomena in nature. So that the utmost that the most learned and inquisitive atheist could ever pretend to was to advance atheism

to a grand *perhaps*; and by endeavouring to demonstrate how things might possibly be as they are without a God, to prove that it is possible there is none: and yet when all is done, their most ingenious endeavours are only a demonstration that the most acute and witty men may be mistaken. For what a hopeless kind of task is it to shew how that may be the effect of a blind chance or necessity, which hath all the characters of a wise design and contrivance fairly imprinted on it? How is it possible for an undesigning chance to fit means to ends, or ends to natures? or so to proportion parts to one another, as to make a comely symmetry in the whole; and this in ten thousand instances, and fail in one? How often, as the abovenamed author from Tully discourses, might a man, after he hath shaken together a set of letters in a bag, fling them out upon the ground, before they would fall into an exact poem, or make a good discourse in prose! And may not a little book be as easily made by chance as the great volume of the world, in which there is such an inexhaustible treasure of rich sense and contrivance? Or how long might a man be in sprinkling colours upon a canvass with a careless hand, before they would happen to fall into the exact picture of a man! And is a man easier made by chance than his picture? Why may we not as well conceive the most regular building in the world to be framed by a casual concourse of stone and iron and timber, as that these blind and rambling parts of matter should chance to place themselves so orderly in the world, and to observe such an exact harmony and decorum, as if they kept time with the musical laws of some almighty mind that composed their

measures, and regulated their motions up and down in the universe.

But granting the atheist what he so eagerly though unsuccessfully contends for, that it is possible all this might happen by mere chance, and consequently that there may be no God in the world; would any man in his wits found his faith upon a mere possibility, when it will be as much as his soul is worth, if he should happen to be mistaken? It is possible, that should he throw himself from the top of a high steeple, the air between may be so condensed as to bear him up, and preserve him from being dashed in pieces by the fall; but would you not think the man stark mad that should venture his neck upon that possibility? And yet it is a far more desperate venture that the atheist makes by thus hazarding his soul to everlasting destruction upon a bare possibility that there may be no God to destroy him.

III. The atheist concludes against the best evidence that the contrary will admit. For that there is a God, we have as full evidence as the matter could bear if there were one; and to require more is absurd and unreasonable. For let us at present suppose, but for argument-sake, that there were such an infinite spirit in the world; a spirit that were as wise, and as good, and as powerful as he whom we call God is supposed to be; supposing, I say, there were such a spirit actually existing, we could not have greater evidence of it than we have already that he actually exists. For we could not see him with our eyes, because we suppose him to be a spirit; we could not demonstrate his existence *a priori*, or from any cause, because being the first

cause he must be uncaused, or self-originated. It remains therefore that the only demonstration we could give of his being is that which we call *a posteriori*, or from such sensible effects as can only be ascribed to the power and wisdom and goodness of such a Being; and of such effects as these we have infinite instances before us. For, in sum, we have all this visible world about us, whose changeable nature demonstrates it to be the effect of some superior cause, and whose unspeakable vastness, beauty, and contrivance argue it to be the effect of some most wise and good and powerful cause. For as to the first, whatsoever is changeable cannot self-exist, but will necessarily proceed from some superior cause; because whatsoever self-exists is necessarily, and whatsoever is necessarily is always the same; that which is without any cause cannot but be; and that which is thus or thus without any cause cannot but be so or so for ever. And consequently, if the world were of itself without any cause, it would not only be necessarily, but also be such as it is necessarily and unchangeably; but contrariwise we plainly perceive that it runs a perpetual course of change and alteration, that its parts are continually altering their figure, and shifting their places with one another; whereas if this part were of itself necessarily, as it must be if the whole be so, it would necessarily be where it is and what it is eternally.

And since the mutability of this world argues it to be the effect of some superior cause, I would fain know whether, considering the vastness and beauty and contrivance of it, it be not most reasonable to attribute it to such an all-good, all-wise, and almighty

cause as we suppose God to be. For what less than an infinite power can bear a due proportion to such a vast and immense world? Should you enter into a vast and magnificent palace, and find no creature in it but a company of mice or weasels, could you possibly believe that these impotent vermin built it? And yet the building of the most royal palace doth not so much exceed the power of these weak animals, as the building of this world doth the power of any cause but a God. But then if we consider the infinite number of beings in the world that are capable of happiness, and the vast provisions that are made to entertain them according to their several capacities, we cannot but thence conclude, that the power which made them was acted by an infinite goodness. Lastly, if we consider the rare and admirable contrivance of the several parts of the world; how perfect each one is in its kind, how exactly fitted to each other, and what a lovely symmetry and proportion they all make in the whole; how can we otherwise imagine, but that that power and goodness which caused it was directed by an infinite wisdom? So that the world is such an effect as openly proclaims its cause to be God; and if this evidence of God's existence will not convince men, they are impregnably fortified against all conviction; and if God should carry them into those infinite spaces that are beyond the limits of this world, and there command a new one into being, while they stood looking on, and saw it springing out of nothing, they might with as good reason conclude that world to be nothing but a fortuitous concourse of insensible parts of matter, as they now do that this is so. So that, in fine, he that denies God after

all these demonstrations which he hath given of himself, is out of the reach of argument, and if he pursue his own principles, can never be convinced by any possible reasons. And what a desperate folly is it for men to embrace a belief, which, should they be mistaken, draws after it everlasting ruin, when they have all the reasons to the contrary that the matter is capable of! What is this but to shut their eyes, and cast themselves blindfold on their own destruction, and to resolve to wink hard, and believe against all possible reason, that so they may ruin themselves without any interruption?

VI. And lastly, The atheist plainly contradicts himself in his own conclusion: for by denying that God is, he necessarily denies the possibility of his being. For if he be not, it is impossible he should ever be; because eternity of being is included in the notion of him. For when we speak of God, we mean by him a Being that is before all causes, and the cause of all causes; and that therefore oweth not his being to any prior cause, but doth necessarily, independently, and eternally exist. So that if he be not now, he cannot be at all, because he must begin to be, which is contradictory to the very essential notion and idea of him. For if he should ever begin to be, he cannot be eternal; and if he be not eternal, he cannot be God. So that to say God is not, is by necessary consequence to say he cannot be at all; and yet by a God, we mean at the same time a Being that is endowed with all possible perfections that a being is capable of. Wherefore as by saying that God is not, we do by consequence assert that it is impossible he should ever be; so by asserting that it is impossible he should ever be, we do in effect assert this gross

contradiction, that it is impossible such a being should ever be, as includes all the perfections that are possible to a being. Thus in the same breath we pronounce that God can and cannot be, that it is possible he is, and yet impossible he should ever be. For by saying that he is a being endowed with all the possible perfections of being, we expressly affirm that it is possible he may be; but by saying that there is no such being actually existing, we do as expressly assert that it is impossible he should ever be. He therefore who asserts that God is not, doth by necessary consequence assert this express contradiction, that it is impossible there should ever be a being as perfect as it is possible. And when, if there be a God, men's eternal fate depends but upon believing that he is, and acting accordingly, what a monstrous folly is it for men to contradict themselves to deny him! What is this but to stake their souls upon it, that the very first principle of reasoning is false, and put their fate upon this desperate issue, that unless both parts of a contradiction prove true, they must inevitably perish for ever?

And now having shewn you from what malignant causes atheism springs, and how desperately foolish and unreasonable it is in itself, let us all endeavour, by the serious consideration of what hath been said, to fortify our minds against it. And since this proposition, That God is, is the prime foundation of all religion, it concerns us all to use our utmost diligence to establish our minds in the firm and steadfast belief of it; and this we cannot fail to do, if we heartily endeavour it. For the arguments of God's being do shine all round about us with such a clear and convincing

light, that we need do no more than just open our eyes to see it, and dispel those mischievous causes from our wills, that hide and obscure it from our understandings. And when once we have throughly settled the belief of God's being in our minds, it will mightily influence all our powers of action; it will invite our hope, and alarm our fear, and address to every passion in us that is capable of persuasion, and be an ever-living spring of religion within us. For God is an object so infinitely great in himself, and of such infinite moment and concernment to us, that it is next to impossible we should firmly believe that he is, without being vigorously impressed with religious affections upon the consideration of his being.

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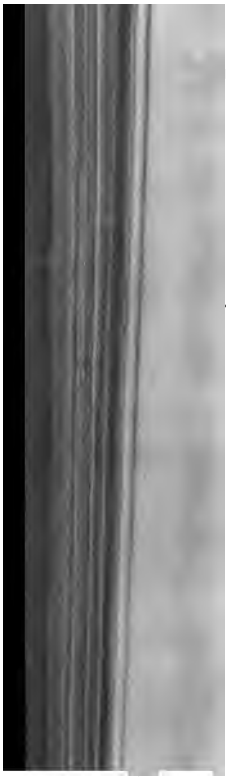

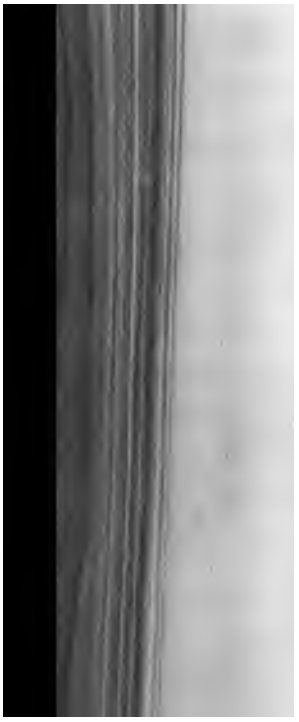

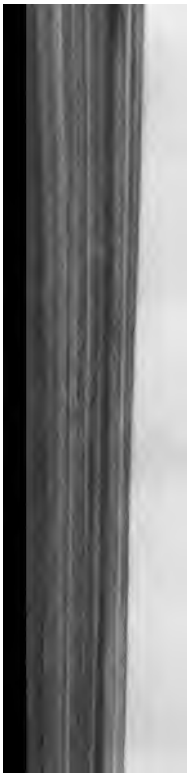

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